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Cover by **FRANK R. PAUL**

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A Classic Reprint from AMAZING STORIES, October, 1930

The MAN who SAW the FUTURE

By EDMOND HAMILTON

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

WRITERS frequently get "typed" just as do moving picture stars. This fate befell Edmond Hamilton, the old "World Saver," a name that has stuck to him through thick and thin for going on 35 years. His first story, The Monster God of Mamurth WEIRD TALES, *Aug., 1926, dealt with a giant invisible spider that roamed the African desert. It rated second only in popularity to* The Woman of the Wood *by A. Merritt which ran in the same issue. This was an auspicious start, and he might have become a serious writer of fantasy except that his second story,* Across Space, *dealing with an alien race pulling Mars from its orbit and hurling it at earth* WEIRD TALES, *Sept., Oct., Nov., 1926, struck such a responsive chord in the readership of the magazine that the editor demanded more of the same and plenty of them.*

So for the next four years Edmond Hamilton repeatedly saved the earth from every conceivable sort of disaster in a series of "epics" with titles like The Atomic Conquerors, Moon Menace, Time Raider, Dimension Terror, Crashing Suns, Star Stealers, Abysmal Invaders, Comet Drivers, The Sun People *and dozens of others including* The Comet Doom, The Other Side of the Moon, Locked Worlds *and* The Universe Wreckers *for*

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AMAZING STORIES *and* AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY.

The plot was always the same. Some frightful menace, usually from out of space but sometimes from out of another dimension, out of time, from the bowels of the earth or even from the sub-microscopic would threaten to conquer or destroy the earth. After a thrilling battle, Edmond Hamilton ingeniously managed to save it.

He was selling. He was popular. But was it art?

The Man Who Saw the Future *should have been titled* The Revolt of Edmond Hamilton, *or* The Author Who Saved Himself. *It was his attempt to prove that he could write something besides world-saving melodramas. The result was a simple story, simply told, with its entire effectiveness pivoting on the competency of its relation.*

The poignancy of the tale captured the hearts of the readers and indicated that Edmond Hamilton was capable of something a bit more artistic in the field of science fiction. He went on from there to vindicate himself completely with Conquest of Two Worlds, WONDER STORIES, *Feb., 1932, one of the most effective attacks against the evils of colonialism ever written. The following year his novelette* The Island of Unreason, WONDER STORIES, *May, 1933, was selected as the best story of the year by the Jules Verne Prize Club, an organization sponsored by one of* AMAZING STORIES' *former editors Raymond A. Palmer.*

Though he would never lose his well-deserved appellation of "World Saver," with his decision to write The Man Who Saw the Future, *Edmond Hamilton set himself on the road to regained self respect and proved to the science fiction world that he was more than a formula-writing hack.*

JEAN DE MARSELAIT, Inquisitor Extraordinary of the King of France, raised his head from the parchments that littered the crude desk at which he sat. His glance shifted along the long stone-walled, torchlit room to the file of mail-clad soldiers who stood like steel statues by its door. A word from him and two of them sprang forward.

"You may bring in the prisoner," he said.

The two disappeared through the door and in moments more came a clang of opening bolts and grating of heavy hinges from somewhere in the building. Then the clang of the returning soldiers, and they entered the room with another man between them whose hands were fettered.

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Illustrated by MOREY

He was a straight figure, and was dressed in drab tunic and hose. His dark hair was long and straight, and his face held a dreaming strength, altogether different from the battered visages of the soldiers or the changeless mask of the Inquisitor. The latter regarded the

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prisoner for a moment, and then lifted one of the parchments from before him and read from it in a smooth, clear voice.

"Henri Lothiere, apothecary's assistant of Paris," he read, "is charged in this year of our lord one thousand four hundred and forty-four with offending against God and the king by committing the crime of sorcery."

The prisoner spoke for the first time, his voice low but steady. "I am no sorcerer, sire."

Jean de Marselait read calmly on from the parchment. "It is stated by many witnesses that for long that part of Paris, called Nanley by some, has been troubled by works of the devil. Ever and anon great claps of thunder have been heard issuing from an open field there without visible cause. They were evidently caused by a sorcerer of power since even exorcists could not halt them.

"It is attested by many that the accused, Henri Lothiere, did in spite of the known diabolical nature of the thing, spend much time at the field in question. It is also attested that the said Henri Lothiere did state that in his opinion the thunderclaps were not of diabolical origin, and that if they were studied, their cause might be discovered.

"It being suspected from this that Henri Lothiere was himself the sorcerer causing the thunderclaps, he was watched and on the third day of June was seen to go in the early morning to the unholy spot with certain instruments. There he was observed going through strange and diabolical conjurations, when there came suddenly another thunderclap and the said Henri Lothiere did vanish entirely from view in that moment. This fact is attested beyond all doubt.

"The news spreading, many hundreds watched around the field during that day. Upon that night before midnight, another thunderclap was heard and the said Henri Lothiere was seen by these hundreds to appear at the field's center as swiftly and as strangely as he had vanished. The fear-stricken hundreds around the field heard him tell them how, by diabolical power, he had gone for hundreds of years into the future, a thing surely possible only to the devil and his minions, and heard him tell other blasphemies before they seized him and brought him to the Inquisitor of the King, praying that he be burned and his work of sorcery thus halted.

"Therefore, Henri Lothiere, since you were seen to vanish and to reappear as only the servants of the evil one might do, and were heard by many to utter the blasphemies mentioned, I must adjudge you a sorcerer with the penalty of death by fire. If any-

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thing there be that you can advance in palliation of your black offense, however, you may now do so before final sentence is passed upon you."

Jean de Marselait laid down the parchment, and raised his eyes to the prisoner. The latter looked round him quickly for a moment, a half-glimpsed panic for an instant in his eyes, then seemed to steady.

"Sire, I cannot change the sentence you will pass upon me," he said quietly, "yet do I wish well to relate once, what happened to me and what I saw. Is it permitted me to tell that from first to last?"

The Inquisitor's head bent, and Henri Lothiere spoke, his voice gaining in strength and fervor as he continued.

SIRE, I, Henri Lothiere, am no sorcerer but a simple apothecary's assistant. It was always my nature, from earliest youth, to desire to delve into matters unknown to men; the secrets of the earth and sea and sky, the knowledge hidden from us. I knew well that this was wicked, that the Church teaches all we need to know and that heaven frowns when we pry into its mysteries, but so strong was my desire to know, that many times I concerned myself with matters forbidden.

"I had sought to know the nature of the lightning, and the manner of flight of the birds, and the way in which fishes are able to live beneath the waters, and the mystery of the stars. So when these thunderclaps began to be heard in the part of Paris in which I lived, I did not fear them so much as my neighbors. I was eager to learn only what was causing them, for it seemed to me that their cause might be learned.

"So I began to go to that field from which they issued, to study them. I waited in it and twice I heard the great thunderclaps myself. I thought they came from near the field's center, and I studied that place. But I could see nothing there that was causing them. I dug in the ground, I looked up for hours into the sky, but there was nothing. And still, at intervals, the thunderclaps sounded.

"I still kept going to the field, though I knew that many of my neighbors whispered that I was engaged in sorcery. Upon that morning of the third day of June, it had occurred to me to take certain instruments, such as loadstones, to the field, to see whether anything might be learned with them. I went, a few superstitious ones following me at a distance. I reached the field's center, and started the examinations I had planned. Then came suddenly another thunderclap

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and with it I passed from the sight of those who had followed and were watching, vanished from view.

"Sire, I cannot well describe what happened in that moment. I heard the thunderclap come as though from all the air around me, stunning my ears with its terrible burst of sound. And at the same moment that I heard it, I was buffeted as though by awful winds and seemed falling downward through terrific depths. Then through the hellish uproar, I felt myself bumping upon a hard surface, and the sounds quickly ceased from about me.

"I had involuntarily closed my eyes at the great thunderclap, but now, slowly, I opened them. I looked around me, first in stupefaction, and then in growing amazement. For I was not in that familiar field at all, Sire, that I had been in a moment before. I was in a room, lying upon its floor, and it was such a room as I had never seen before.

"Its walls were smooth and white and gleaming. There were windows in the walls, and they were closed with sheets of glass so smooth and clear that one seemed looking through a clear opening rather than through glass. The floor was of stone, smooth and seamless as though carven from one great rock, yet seeming not, in some way, to be stone at all. There was a great circle of smooth metal inset in it, and it was on it that I was lying.

"All around the room were many great things the like of which I had never seen. Some seemed of black metal, seemed contrivances or machines of some sort. Black cords or wire connected them to each other and from part of them came a humming sound that did not stop. Others had glass tubes fixed on the front of them, and there were square black plates on which were many shining little handles and buttons.

There was a sound of voices, and I turned to find that two men were bending over me. They were men like myself, yet they were at the same time like no men I had ever met! One was white-bearded and the other plump and bare of face. Neither of them wore cloak or tunic or hose. Instead they wore loose and straight-hanging garments of cloth.

"They were both greatly excited, it seemed, and were talking to each other as they bent over me. I caught a word or two of their speech in a moment, and found it was French they were talking. But it was not the French I knew, being so strange and with so many new words as to be almost a different language. I could understand the drift, though, of what they were saying.

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"We have succeeded!" the plump one was shouting excitedly. "We've brought someone through at last!"

" 'They will never believe it,' the other replied. 'They'll say it was faked.'

" 'Nonsense!" cried the first. 'We can do it again, Rastin; we can show them before their own eyes!'

They bent toward me, seeing me staring at them.

" 'Where are you from?' shouted the plump-faced one. 'What time—what year—what century?'

" 'He doesn't understand, Thicourt,' muttered the white-bearded one. 'What year is this now, my friend?' he asked me.

"I found voice to answer. 'Surely, sirs, whoever you be, you know that this is the year fourteen hundred and forty-four,' I said.

"That set them off again into a babble of excited talk, of which I could make out only a word here and there. They lifted me up, seeing how sick and weak I felt, and seated me in a strange, but very comfortable chair. I felt dazed. The two were still talking excitedly, but finally the white-bearded one, Rastin, turned to me. He spoke to me, very slowly, so that I understood him clearly, and he asked me my name. I told him.

" 'Henri Lothiere,' he repeated. 'Well, Henri you must try to understand. You are not now in the year 1444. You are five hundred years in the future, or what would seem to you the future. This is the year 1944.'

" 'And Rastin and I have jerked you out of your own time across five solid centuries,' said the other, grinning.

"I looked from one to the other. 'Messieurs,' I pleaded, and Rastin shook his head.

" 'He does not believe,' he said to the other. Then to me, 'Where were you just before you found yourself here, Henri?' he asked.

" 'In a field at the outskirts of Paris,' I said.

" 'Well, look from that window and see if you still believe yourself in your 15th century Paris.' "

I WENT to the window. I looked out. Mother of God, what a sight before my eyes! The familiar gray little houses, the open fields behind them, the saunterers in the dirt streets—all these were gone and it was a new and terrible city that lay about me! Its broad streets were of stone and great buildings of many levels rose on either side of them. Great numbers of people dressed like the two beside me, moved in the streets and also strange vehicles or carriages, undrawn by horse or ox, that rushed to and fro at undreamed-of speed! I staggered back to the chair.

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"'You believe now, Henri?' asked the white beard, Rastin, kindly enough, and I nodded weakly. My brain was whirling.

"He pointed to the circle of metal on the floor and the machines around the room. Those are what we used to jerk you from your own time to this one,' he said.

"'But how, sirs?' I asked. 'For the love of God, how is it that you can take me from one time to another? Have ye become gods or devils?'

"'Neither the one nor the other, Henri,' he answered. 'We are simply scientists, physicists—men who want to know as much as man can know and who spend our lives in seeking knowledge.'

"I felt my confidence returning. These were men such as I had dreamed might some day be. 'But what can you do with time?' I asked. 'Is not time a thing unalterable, unchanging?'

"Both shook their heads. 'No, Henri, it is not. But lately have our men of science found that out.'

"They went on to tell me of things that I could not understand. It seemed they were telling that their men of knowledge had found time to be a mere measurement, or dimension just as length or breadth or thickness. They mentioned names with reverence that I had never heard—Einstein and De Sitter and Lorentz. I was in a maze at their words.

"They said that just as men use force to move or rotate matter from one point along the three known measurements to another, so might matter be rotated from one point in time, the fourth measurement, to another, if the right force were used. They said that their machines produced that force and applied it to the metal circle from five hundred years before to this time of theirs.

"They had tried it many times, they said, but nothing had been on the spot at that time and they had rotated nothing but the air above it from the one time to the other, and the reverse. I told them of the thunderclaps that had been heard at the spot in the field and that had made me curious. They said that they had been caused by the changing of the air above the spot from the one time to the other in their trials. I could not understand these things.

"They said then that I had happened to be on the spot when they had again turned on their force and so had been rotated out of my own time into theirs. They said that they had always hoped to get someone living from a distant time in that way, since such a man would be a proof to all the other men of knowledge of what they had been able to do.

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"I could not comprehend, and they saw and told me not to fear, I was not fearful, but excited at the things that I saw around me. I asked of those things and Rastin and Thicourt laughed and explained some of them to me as best they could. Much they said that I did not understand but my eyes saw marvels in that room of which I had never dreamed.

"They showed me a thing like a small glass bottle with wires inside, and then told me to touch a button beneath it. I did so and the bottle shone with a brilliant light exceeding that of scores of candles. I shrank back, but they laughed, and when Rastin touched the button again, the light in the glass thing vanished. I saw that there were many of these things in the ceiling.

"They showed me also a rounded black object of metal with a wheel at the end. A belt ran around the wheel and around smaller wheels connected to many machines. They touched a lever on this object and a sound of humming came from it and the wheel turned very fast, turning all the machines with the belt. It turned faster than any man could ever have turned it, yet when they touched the lever again, its turning ceased. They said that it was the power of the lightning in the skies that they used to make the light and to turn that wheel!

"My brain reeled at the wonders that they showed. One took an instrument from the table that he held to his face, saying that he would summon the other scientists or men of knowledge to see their experiment that night. He spoke into the instrument as though to different men, and let me hear voices from it answering him! They said that the men who answered were leagues separated from him!

"I could not believe—and yet somehow I did believe! I was half-dazed with wonder and yet excited too. The white-bearded man, Rastin, saw that, and encouraged me. Then they brought a small box with an opening and placed a black disk on the box, and set it turning in some way. A woman's voice came from the opening of the box, singing. I shuddered when they told me that the women was one who had died years before. Could the dead speak thus?

HOW can I describe what I saw there? Another box or cabinet there was, with an opening also. I thought it was like that from which it had heard the dead woman singing, but they said it was different. They touched buttons on it and a voice came from it speaking in a tongue I knew not. They said that the man was speaking thousands of leagues from us, in a

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strange land across the uncrossed western ocean, yet he seemed speaking by my side!

"They saw how dazed I was by these things, and gave me wine. At that I took heart, for wine, at least, was as it had always been.

" 'You will want to see Paris—the Paris of our time, Henri?' asked Rastin.

" 'But it is different—terrible —' I said.

" 'We'll take you,' Thicourt said, 'but first your clothes—'

"He got a long light coat that they had me put on, that covered my tunic and hose, and a hat of grotesque round shape that they put on my head. They led me then out of the building and into the street.

"I gazed astoundedly along that street. It had a raised walk at either side, on which many hundreds of people moved to and fro, all dressed in as strange a fashion. Many, like Rastin and Thicourt, seemed of gentle blood, yet, in spite of this, they did not wear a sword or even a dagger. There were no knights or squires, or priests or peasants. All seemed dressed much the same.

"Small lads ran to and fro selling what seemed sheets of very thin white parchment, many times folded and covered with lettering. Rastin said that these had written in them all things that had happened through all the world, even but hours before. I said that to write even one of these sheets would take a clerk many days, but they said that the writing was done in some way very quickly by machines.

"In the broad stone street between the two raised walks were rushing back and forth the strange vehicles I had seen from the window. There was no animal pulling or pushing any one of them, yet they never halted their swift rush, and carried many people at unthinkable speed. Sometimes those who walked stepped before the rushing vehicles, and then from them came terrible warning snarls or moans that made the walkers draw back.

"One of the vehicles stood at the walk's edge before us, and we entered it and sat side by side on a soft leather seat. Thicourt sat behind a wheel on a post, with levers beside him. He touched these and a humming sound came from somewhere in the vehicle and then it too began to rush forward. Faster and faster along the street it went, yet neither of them seemed afraid.

"Many thousands of these vehicles were moving swiftly through the streets about us. We passed on, between great buildings and along wider streets, my eyes and ears numbed by what I saw about me. Then the buildings grew smaller, after we had gone for miles through them, and

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we were passing through the city's outskirts. I could not believe, hardly, that it was Paris in which I was.

"We came to a great flat and open field outside the city and there Thicourt stopped and we got out of the vehicle. There were big buildings at the field's end, and I saw other vehicles rolling out of them across the field, ones different from any I had yet seen, with flat winglike projections on either side. They rolled out over the field very fast and then I cried out as I saw them rising from the ground into the air. Mother of God, they were flying! The men in them were flying!

"Rastin and Thicourt took me forward to the great buildings. They spoke to men there and one brought forward one of the winged cars. Rastin told me to get in, and though I was terribly afraid, there was too terrible a fascination that drew me in. Thicourt and Rastin entered after me, and we sat in seats with the other man. He had before him levers and buttons, while at the car's front was a great thing like a double-oar or paddle. A loud roaring came and that double-blade began to whirl so swiftly that I could not see it. Then the car rolled swiftly forward, bumping on the ground, and then ceased to bump. I looked down, then shuddered. The ground was already far beneath! I too, was flying in the air!

"We swept upward at terrible speed, that increased steadily. The thunder of the car was terrific, and as the man at the levers changed their position, we curved around and over downward and upward as though birds. Rastin tried to explain to me how the car flew, but it was all too wonderful, and I could not understand. I only knew that a wild thrilling excitement held me, and that it were worth life and death to fly thus, if but for once, as I had always dreamed that men might some day do.

"Higher and higher we went. The earth lay far beneath and I saw now that Paris was indeed a mighty city, its vast mass of buildings stretching away almost to the horizons below us. A mighty city of the future that it had been given my eyes to look on!

"There were other winged cars darting to and fro in the air about us, and they said that many of these were starting or finishing journeys of hundreds of leagues in the air. Then I cried out as I saw a great shape coming nearer us in the air. It was many rods in length, tapering to a point at both ends, a vast ship sailing in the air! There were great cabins on its lower part and in them we glimpsed people gazing out, coming and going inside, dancing

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even! They told me that vast ships of the air like this sailed to and fro for thousands of leagues with hundreds inside them.

"The huge vessel of the air passed us and then our winged car began to descend. It circled smoothly down to the field like a swooping bird, and, when we landed there, Rastin and Thicourt led me back to the ground-vehicle. It was late afternoon by then, the sun sinking westward, and darkness had descended by the time we rolled back into the great city.

"But in that city was not darkness! Lights were everywhere in it, flashing brilliant lights that shone from its mighty buildings and that blinked and burned and ran like water in great symbols upon the buildings above the streets. Their glare was like that of day! We stopped before a great building into which Rastin and Thicourt led me.

"It was vast inside and in it were many people in rows on rows of seats. I thought it a cathedral at first but saw soon that it was not. The wall at one end of it, toward which all in it were gazing, had on it pictures of people, great in size, and those pictures were moving as though themselves alive! And they were talking one to another, too, as though with living voices! I trembled. What magic!

"With Rastin and Thicourt in seats beside me, I watched the pictures enthralled. It was like looking through a great window into strange worlds. I saw the sea, seemingly tossing and roaring there before me, and then saw on it a ship, a vast ship of size incredible, without sails or oars, holding thousands of people. I seemed on that ship as I watched, seemed moving forward with it. They told me it was sailing over the western ocean that never men had crossed. I feared!

"Then another scene, land appearing from the ship. A great statue, upholding a torch, and we on the ship seemed passing beneath it. They said that the ship was approaching a city, the city of New York, but mists hid all before us. Then suddenly the mists before the ship cleared and there before me seemed the city.

MOTHER of God, what a city! Climbing range on range of great mountain-like buildings that aspired up as though to scale heaven itself! Far beneath narrow streets pierced through them and in the picture we seemed to land from the ship, to go through those streets of the city. It was an incredible city of madness! The streets and ways were mere chasms between the sky-toppling buildings! People —people—people—millions on millions of them rushed through

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the endless streets. Countless ground-vehicles rushed to and fro also, and other different ones that roared above the streets and still others below them!

"Winged flying-cars and great airships were sailing to and fro over the titanic city, and in the waters around it great ships of the sea and smaller ships were coming as man never dreamed of surely, that reached out from the mighty city on all sides. And with the coming of darkness, the city blazed with living light!

"The pictures changed, showed other mighty cities, though none so terrible as that one. It showed great mechanisms that appalled me. Giant metal things that scooped in an instant from the earth as much as a man might dig in days. Vast things that poured molten metal from them like water. Others that lifted loads that hundreds of men and oxen could not have stirred.

"They showed men of knowledge like Rastin and Thicourt beside me. Some were healers, working miraculous cures in a way that I could not understand. Others were gazing through giant tubes at the stars, and the pictures showed what they saw, showed that all of the stars were great suns like our sun, and that our sun was greater than earth, that earth moved around it instead of the reverse! How could such things be, I wondered. Yet they said that it was so, that earth was round like an apple, and that with other earths like it, the planets, moved round the sun. I heard, but could scarce understand.

"At last Rastin and Thicourt led me out of that place of living pictures and to their ground-vehicle. We went again through the streets to their buildings, where first I had found myself. As we went I saw that none challenged my right to go, nor asked who was my lord. And Rastin said that none now had lords, but that all were lord, king and priest and noble, having no more power than any in the land. Each man was his own master! It was what I had hardly dared to hope for, in my own time, and this, I thought, was greatest of all the marvels they had shown me!

"We entered again their building but Rastin and Thicourt took me first to another room than the one in which I had found myself. They said that their men of knowledge were gathered there to hear of their feat, and to have it proved to them.

" 'You would not be afraid to return to your own time, Henri?' asked Rastin, and I shook my head.

" 'I want to return to it,' I told them. 'I want to tell my people there what I have seen—what the future is that they must strive for.'

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"'But if they should not believe you?' Thicourt asked.

"'Still I must go—must tell them,' I said.

"Rastin grasped my hand. 'You are a man, Henri,' he said. Then, throwing aside the cloak and hat I had worn outside, they went with me down to the big white-walled room where first I had found myself.

"It was lit brightly now by many of the shining glass things on ceiling and walls, and in it were many men. They all stared strangely at me and at my clothes, and talked excitedly so fast that I could not understand. Rastin began to address them.

"He seemed explaining how he had brought me from my own time to his. He used many terms and words that I could not understand, incomprehensible references and phrases, and I could understand but little. I heard again the names of Einstein and De Sitter that I had heard before, repeated frequently by these men as they disputed with Rastin and Thicourt. They seemed disputing about me.

"One big man was saying, 'Impossible! I tell you, Rastin, you have faked this fellow!'

"Rastin smiled. 'You don't believe that Thicourt and I brought him here from his own time across five centuries?"

"A chorus of excited negatives answered him. He had me stand up and speak to them. They asked me many questions, part of which I could not understand. I told them of my life, and of the city of my own time, and of king and priest and noble, and of many simple things that they seemed quite ignorant of. Some appeared to believe me but others did not, and again their dispute broke out.

"'There is a way to settle the argument, gentlemen, said Rastin finally.

"'How?' all cried.

"'Thicourt and I brought Henri across five centuries by rotating the time-dimensions at this spot,' he said. 'Suppose we reverse that rotation and send him back before your eyes—would that be proof?'

"They all said that it would. Rastin turned to me. 'Stand on the metal circle, Henri,' he said. I did so.

"All were watching very closely. Thicourt did something quickly with the levers and buttons of the mechanisms in the room. They began to hum, and blue light came from the glass tubes on some. All were quiet watching me as I stood there on the circle of metal. I met Rastin's eyes and something in me made me call goodbye to him. He waved his hand and smiled. Thicourt pressed more buttons and the hum of the mechanisms grew louder. Then he reached toward

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another lever. All in the room were tense and I was tense.

Then I saw Thicourt's arm move as he turned one of the many levers.

"A terrific clap of thunder seemed to break around me, and as I closed my eyes before its shock, I felt myself whirling around and falling at the same time as though into a maelstrom, just as I had done before. The awful falling sensation ceased in a moment and the sound subsided. I opened my eyes. I was on the ground at the center of the familiar field from which I had vanished hours before, upon the morning of that day. It was night now, though, for that day I had spent five hundred years in the future.

"There were many people gathered around the field, fearful, and they screamed and some fled when I appeared in the thunderclap. I went toward those who remained. My mind was full of things I had seen and I wanted to tell them of these things. I wanted to tell them how they must work ever toward that future time of wonder.

"But they did not listen. Before I had spoken minutes to them they cried out on me as a sorcerer and a blasphemer, and seized me and brought me here to the Inquisitor, to you, sire. And to you, sire, I have told the truth in all things. I know that in doing so I have set the seal of my own fate, and that only sorcerer would ever tell such a tale, yet despite that I am glad. Glad that I have told one at least of this time of what I saw five centuries in the future. Glad that I saw! Glad that I saw the things that someday, sometime, must come to be—"

IT WAS a week later that they burned Henri Lothiere. Jean de Marselait, lifting his gaze from his endless parchment accusation and examens on that afternoon, looked out through the window at a thick curl of black smoke going up from the distant square.

"Strange, that one," he mused. "A sorcerer, of course, but such a one as I had never heard before. I wonder," he half-whispered, "was there any truth in that wild tale of his? The future—who can say—what men might do—?"

There was silence in the room as he brooded for a moment, and then he shook himself as one ridding himself of absurd speculations. "But tush—enough of these crazy fancies. They will have me for a sorcerer if I yield to these wild fancies and visions *of the futicre.*"

And bending again with his pen to the parchment before him, he went gravely on with his work.

THE END

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A Classic Reprint from AMAZING STORIES, October, 1929

Illustrated by BRIGGS

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The CHAMBER of LIFE

By G. PEYTON WERTENBAKER

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

Readers of AMAZING STORIES *have already read* The Coming of the Ice *by G. Peyton Wertenbaker reprinted in the July, 1961 issue of this magazine. Though only 19 at the time it was published in the June, 1926* AMAZING STORIES, *the imaginative drive and youthful power of the young author had combined to compensate for its stylistic crudities and make it a memorable story.*

Three years later, at the mature age of 22 he made his next appearance in AMAZING STORIES *with* The Chamber of Life. *The promise displayed by* The Coming of the Ice *and the even earlier* The Man From the Atom *was fully justified. Few modern authors could have handled the theme of* The Chamber of Life *with greater maturity or stylistic finish than G. Peyton Wertenbaker. If the story has any fault, it rests in the realm of over sophistication and subtlety.*

The extraordinarily difficult flashback technique is employed throughout, demanding alertness from the reader to keep abreast of the complexity of the method. The creation of a dream world, through scientific means, which would prove more real and more desirable, in certain ways than the real worlds, was not original with the author, but it was new to the science fiction magazines. Eventually it became a standardized concept in science fiction, but in The Chamber of Life G. *Peyton Wertenbaker was doing it early and with considerable skill.*

The "dream" world that his protagonist enters is an objective yet devastating projection of an impersonally planned scientific civilization. This is not a deliberately cruel or vicious world in the sense of 1984, *but it is a near-perfect communistic-socialistic state where the rights of the individual are secondary and where the pattern of every individual is planned hundreds of years in advance of his birth. He is born into a world where his education, occupation, marriage and life expectancy have been carefully calculated. This is no room for random factors.*

The message of the ultimate

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technological system is still secondary to the adroit allegory Wertenbaker projects. We have here what amounts to a message within a message. We all dream of a different life or a different world. But there is no permanent place for us in the world of dreams. Like the perfect scientific state of tomorrow, our intrusion will not be permanent if it is not part of the plan. Therefore, we must always return from our dreams to contend with hard reality. The temptation is always present to find some means of escaping reality, even temporarily, but we must resist it at the risk of even greater unhappiness.

G. Peyton Wertenbaker wrote very few works of science fiction. One of these, The Ship That Turned Aside (AMAZING STORIES, *March, 1930) was reprinted in Groff Conklin's anthology* Big Book of Science Fiction *under the pen name of Green Peyton. One other outstanding tale remains unreprinted,* Elaine's Tomb *from* AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, *Winter, 1930.*

A Strange Awakening

MY first sensation was one of sudden and intense cold—a chill that shot through my body and engulfed it like a charge of electricity. For a moment I was conscious of nothing else. Then I knew that I was sinking in cold water, and that I was fighting instinctively against the need to gasp and breathe fresh air. I kicked weakly and convulsively. I opened my eyes, and squeezed them as the bright green water stung them. Then I hung for an instant as if suspended over the depths, and began to rise. It seemed hours before I shot up into the open air again, and was drinking it deeply and thankfully into my tortured lungs. The sun touched my head warmly like the hand of a benign god.

Floating gently, I lay there for a long while before I even looked about me. There was a vague confusion in my head, as if I had just awakened from a long sleep. Some memory seemed to be fading away, something I could still feel but couldn't understand. Then it was gone, and I was alone and empty, riding on the water.

I glanced about, puzzled. Only a few yards away rose the gray stone side of the embankment, with its low parapet, and behind that the Drive. There was no one in sight—not even a car—and the open windows of the apartment houses across the Drive seemed very quiet. People slept behind them.

It was only a little after dawn.

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The sun, blazing and tinted with pink, had hardly risen from the horizon. The lake was still lined with dark shadows behind glittering ridges of morning sunlight, and a cool breeze played across my face, coming in from the east. Over the city, the sound of a street car rumbling into motion, rising and dying away, was like the crowing of a rooster in the country.

I shivered, and began to swim. A few strokes brought me to the enbankment, and I clambered up, almost freezing as I left the water. I was fully clothed, but without a hat. Perhaps I had lost it in the lake. I stood there, dripping and chill, and suddenly I realized that I had just waked up in the water. I had no recollection of falling in, nor even of being there. I could remember nothing of the previous night.

A glance along the Drive told me where I was, at the corner of Fifty-third street. My apartment was only a few blocks away. Had I been walking in my sleep? My mind was a blank, with turbulent, dim impressions moving confusedly under the surface.

TREMBLING in the chill air, I started up the Drive. I must go home and change at once. Something came back to me—a memory of talking to some friends at the Club. But was that last night? Or months ago? It was as though I had slept for months. We had had a few drinks —could I have been drunk, and fallen into the lake on my way home? But I never took more than two or three drinks. Something had happened.

Then I remembered the stranger. We had all been sitting about the lounge, talking of something. What had we been discussing? Franklin had mentioned Einstein's new theory—we had played with that for a while, none of us with the least idea what it was about. Then the conversation had shifted slowly from one topic to another, all having to do with scientific discoveries.

Somewhere in the midst of it, Barclay had come in. He brought with him a guest—a straight, fine-looking man with a military carriage, about fifty years old. Barclay had introduced him as Mr. Melbourne. He spoke with a slight southern accent.

In some way Melbourne and I gravitated into a corner. We went on with the conversation while the others left it. They drifted into politics, drawing together about the table where the whisky stood, leaving us alone.

Melbourne had been a fascinating man to talk to. He discussed topics ranging from theories of matter to the early Cretan culture, and related them all to one dominant scientific thread. He spoke like a man of wide knowl-

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edge and experience. . . . As I walked up the Drive, bits of his conversation came disjointedly back to me with the clarity and significance of sentences from Spengler.

An early-morning taxi went by slowly as I crossed the Drive to my apartment. The driver stopped a moment, and looked at me in astonishment.

"What's the matter, buddy," he said, "you look all wet. Fall in the lake?" I smiled, embarrassed.

"Looks that way, doesn't it?" I answered.

"Can I take you anywhere?"

"No," I said, "I live here." He grinned, and started off again.

"Wish I'd been in on that party!" he called back, as he drove away.

I frowned, once more with that puzzled feeling, and went in.

Melbourne's Story

GLIMPSES of last night came back to me and pieced themselves together slowly while I undressed and drew the water for my bath.

Melbourne had been interested to know that I worked for Bausch, the motion picture producer.

"Perhaps you could be of aid to me some time," he said thoughtfully.

"In what way, Mr. Melbourne?" I asked him.

"I can talk to you about that later," he replied cryptically. "Tell me about your work."

So I told him the conception I had of the motion pictures to be made in the future. He listened with keen interest.

"I visualize a production going beyond anything done today," I said, "and yet one that would be possible now, if there were someone capable of creating it. A picture with sound and color, reproducing faithfully the ordinary life about us, its tints and voices, even the noises of the city —or traffic passing in the street and newsboys crying the scores of the afternoon games—vividly and naturally. My picture would be so carefully constructed that the projector could be stopped at any moment and the screen would show a scene as harmonious in design and composition and coloring, and as powerful in feeling, as a painting by Rockwell Kent." After a pause I added, "And I'd give almost anything if I could do it myself."

Melbourne looked at me sympathetically, reflectively.

"It might be possible," he said after a time.

"What do you mean, Mr. Melbourne?" He puffed at a cigar, and considered.

"It's not something I could explain to you off-hand," he said. "It's strange and it's new. It needs preparation."

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"I'm ready to listen," I said with eager interest. He smiled.

"Perhaps I had better tell you a little of my life."

"Go on," I answered briefly.

"I had ideas much like yours when I was a boy," he began his story. "In high school and college I had believed myself an artist. I was a good musician, and I dabbled with painting and literature. I wanted to come back for post-graduate work, though, and something attracted me to science. I had put off studying mathematics until my graduating year, only to find that it fascinated me. And I was curious about physics.

WHILE I was studying for my Master's degree and my Doctorate, I felt the need of some interest to merge all the divergent sides of my nature. Something that would give me a chance to be both the artist and the man of science. That was a quarter of a century ago. The motion picture and the phonograph were just coming into the public eye. They seemed to supply just the field for which I felt a need.

"I had much the same idea as yourself, except that there were no discoveries to back it—no color photography, no method for harmonizing sound and sight. Indeed, neither the screen nor the phonograph had come to be regarded yet as essentially more than a toy. But, like yourself, I had vision. And enthusiasm. And an intense desire to create.

"After I had taken my degrees, I went to work with almost abnormal intensity. With sufficient income to live as I desired, I fitted up my laboratory and concentrated on the thing I wanted to do. I spent years at it. I gave my youth—or, at least, the best of my youth—to that labor. Long before sound and color pictures were perfected commercially, I had developed similar processes for myself. But they were not what I wanted. The real thing was beyond my grasp, and I couldn't see how to attain it.

"I worked feverishly. I think I must have worked myself into a sort of frenzy, a sort of madness. I never mingled with people, and I became bitter and despondent. One day my nerves broke down. I smashed everything in my laboratory, all my models, all my apparatus, and I burned the plans and papers I had labored over for years.

"My physician told me that I must rest and recuperate. He told me I must interest myself again in daily life, in people and inanimate things. So I went away. For the next few years I traveled. I tore myself away from everything scientific and plunged into the business of living. Almost overnight I became an adventurer, tasting sensations with

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the same ardor I had once given to my work. I went back to art, to painting and literature and music. I was a connoisseur of wines and of foods and of women. I was an experimenter with life.

"Little by little, though, the zest of that passed away. I grew tired of my dilettantism. And eventually I found that, even while I had been moving about the world and experiencing its curious values, my mind had been grappling quietly, subconsciously, with my old problem. The change in my life had given me the wider outlook, the keener understanding necessary to the accomplishment of my task. In the end, I went back to it again with renewed vigor. With greater power, too, and greater sanity."

MELBOURNE paused here. Sensing his need, I brought him a highball, and one for myself. He tasted it with a quizzical expression.

"They call this whisky nowadays!" he observed absently, with quiet irony. I wanted to hear the rest of his account.

"Go on with your story, sir," I begged him.

"The rest is simple enough—but it's the meat of the narrative. You see, I had to revise the way I was going about my work, and I went at it at a new angle. By this time wireless telegraphy was being widely developed, and there were many features of it that appealed to me. With the knowledge I had gained during my first feverish years of experiment, however, I was able to go far beyond what has been done in recent times with radio.

"I used a system differing in many respects from that of the commercial radio. We haven't time now to go into all that—I can tell you later, and it involves much that is highly technical and still secret. It is sufficient if I explain that my object was to evolve and fuse methods for doing with each of the senses what radio does with sound. Telephotography was the simplest problem—the others required an almost superhuman amount of labor.

"But my biggest job was to combine them. And, to do that, I had to use knowledge I had gained not only in the laboratory but in my wanderings about the earth—not only in the colleges and salons of Europe and America, but in the bazaars and temples of India, Egypt, China. I had to unite the lore of ancient and modern civilizations, and I created a new factor in electrical science. I suppose the simplest and most intelligible name for it would be mental telepathy. But it is more than that, and basically it is as simple and material as your own motion pictures."

I think Melbourne would have

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gone on and told me more about his discoveries. At that moment, however, he paused to reflect, and we looked up to find the others leaving. The bottle of Scotch was empty.

"Ready, Melbourne?" Barclay called. We rose.

"I didn't realize it was so late," Melbourne answered. "Mr. Barrett and I have found each other most interesting."

We all found our hats and went out. Melbourne and Barclay, each apologizing for having neglected the other, said good-bye. Barclay was tired and wanted to go to bed. He went off with the others, but Melbourne turned my way.

"If you're not too weary of my company," he said, "I'll go with you a little way."

"You know I'm not," I answered. "I've never been so interested in anything before. It sounds like a chapter from Wells, or Jules Verne."

He smiled, with a little shake of his head, and we walked on for awhile in silence toward the lake. . . .

ALL this came back to me swiftly and with an effect of incoherence, much as a dream moves, during the few moments when I was getting ready for my bath. I laid out my shaving things, and put a record on the Victrola. I have never quite conquered my need for music while I bathe and dress. I think the record was a Grieg nocturne—something cool and quiet, with a touch of acutely sweet pain and melancholy.

Then I happened to glance at a mirror for the first time. I stood amazed and transfixed. Overnight I had grown a beard such as wanderers bring back with them from the wilderness. Under the beard, my face seemed to have altered somehow, to have changed in some peculiar way. Physically it appeared younger, with an expression of calm and repose such as I had never before seen on a man's face. But the eyes were wise and old, as if—overnight!—the mind behind them had learned the knowledge of all time.

Or was it overnight? I could not lose that feeling that time had passed by since my last contact with ordinary life. It was as though, somewhere and somehow, I had lived for weeks or months in some new plane, and forgotten it. I felt richer and older than I had once felt, and the things I had been remembering seemed remote.

At that moment, a chance strain from the machine in my living room brought back a whole new group of vivid impressions, strange and yet in a sense more familiar than my memories of Melbourne. They opened up to me a different life in which I seemed to have participated by chance,

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and a life which had, at first sight, no point of contact with the reality to which I had returned. . . .

A Chance Strain from Grieg

I RECALLED waking up in another place, on a long slope of green hill that overlooked a valley. It was dawn again. The sun was just rising over the crest of the hill behind me, and it threw long shadows across the grass from the tall, slender trees along the summit. Down in the valley a broad, clean river of clear water followed the curve of the hill until it disappeared from sight. There were other hills beyond the river, all with the same long, simple slope of grass; and, beyond the hills, there were the tops of blue mountains, swathed in white morning mist.

It was a strange place. Its strangeness consisted in a subtle appearance of order and care, as though a gardener or an army of gardeners had arranged and tended the whole vast sweep of landscape for years. It was uncultivated and deserted as waste land, but as well trimmed, in spite of its spaciousness, as a lawn.

The morning was very warm. I was not conscious of any chill in the air. I was clothed only in short trousers, such as athletes wear, and a short belted tunic without sleeves and loose—both of them indescribably soft and comfortable.

I was aware of the strangeness of my awakening, but I seemed to have no definite recollection of falling asleep. I felt that I had come there during my sleep under unusual circumstances and from a very different life, but the thought didn't disturb me or trouble my mind in any way. My chief emotion was a curious feeling of expectancy. I knew that I was about to have some new and curious experience, something not trivial, and I was eager to meet it.

I lay there for awhile, drinking in the beauty of the morning, and breathing an air of miraculous purity and freshness. Finally I stood up, light and conscious of a sudden grace, aware for the first time, in its departure, of the awkwardness and weight which ordinarily attend our movements on earth. It was as if some of the earth's gravity had been lost.

For a while I examined the valley, but I saw no sign of life there. Then I turned and went slowly up the hill, the sunlight falling warmly on my body, and my feet sinking sensuously in the deep grass.

WHEN I came to the crest and looked over, I saw another valley before me, deeper than the first. The hill rolled away, down

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and down for miles, to a long, wide plain. More hills rose from the plain on every side, as simply as if they had been built there by the hand of some gigantic child playing in a wilderness of sand. And the river, coming around the base of the hill on which I was standing, but several miles away, swept out upon a great aqueduct of stone, hundreds of feet high, which crossed the plain through its very center, a straight line of breath-taking beauty, and disappeared far away into the pass between two mountains. The whole scene was too perfect to be wholly natural.

At the center of the plain stood a tall, white building. Even in the distance from which I viewed it, it looked massive—larger than any skyscraper I had ever seen. But it was delicately and intricately designed, terraced much as most modern office buildings in New York are terraced, but more elaborately. Its base stood about the aqueduct, which passed through it, and it swept up magnificently to a slender peak almost level with the crest of the hill where I was standing. It was the only building in sight.

I don't know how long I stood there, admiring the clean sweep and vastness of the scene, before I saw something rise sharply, with a flashing of bright wings, from some hidden courtyard or terrace of the building. It was followed closely by another and then another, like a flight of birds. They shot up swiftly, circled once or twice, and moved away in different directions, straight and purposeful. One of them came toward my hill.

IT was only a few moments before the thing sped up to me and swooped down as I waved my arms. It was, of course, a machine, slender and long, with wide arching wings. It seemed almost light enough to float. It had a deck, shielded from the wind by a shimmering transparent thing like a thin wire screen, and under the deck a cabin made, it seemed, of glass. A man and a woman stood on the deck, the woman handling the controls. They were both dressed much like myself.

The machine came to rest on the hill near me. I stepped forward, and the man leaped down to meet me. His first greeting was curious.

"So you *are* here," he said. His voice was small but cool, penetrating and metallic. I thought of fine steel wires. And, when I replied, my own voice had something of the same quality.

"Were you expecting me?" I said. He nodded, shaking my hand briefly and quietly.

"We know all about you," he answered. I was pleased—it made things simpler—but I wanted to ask him who I was. I

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didn't remember anything up to the moment of my awakening on the other side of the hill. Instead, I asked him:

"Shall I go aboard?" He nodded again, and waved his hand toward the ladder. I went aboard lithely, and he followed. The girl and I glanced at each other; I was surprised and rather disturbed by her beauty and cleanness of body. I turned to the man, a little embarrassed, as she manipulated some controls and set the ship in motion again.

"You'll have to forgive me," I said. "Something has happened, and I don't know things. I've completely lost my memory."

They understood at once.

"Your name is Baret." He pronounced it oddly. "I am Edvar, and this girl is Selda." We all looked at each other intently, and I went on hesitantly.

"I don't know where I am. Can you tell me something about myself?" Edvar shook his head.

"Only this," he said, "that we were notified of your presence and your name. This city is Richmond." I glanced about quickly.

"Richmond!" I exclaimed. "Virginia?" But he shook his head.

"I don't understand you," he replied.

I went on, with a puzzled frown. "It has changed. . . ." Both of them looked at me curiously.

"How has it changed, Baret?" the girl, Selda, asked me. I glanced at her absently and closed my eyes.

"Why . . . I don't know," I stammered, "I don't remember." For a few moments there was silence, except for the shouting of the wind past our ship. Then Selda asked me another question.

"Where are you from?" I shook my head helplessly, and answered again, "I don't know—I don't remember."

A MOMENT later we dipped into the shadow of the building, which they called Richmond. We slipped by a succession of vast and intricate façades until we came to a court-like terrace, hundreds of feet above the ground and sheltered on three sides by walls that leaped up toward the sky for hundreds of feet more. The effect of height was dizzying and magnificent.

Selda brought the ship to a quick and graceful landing. I found that we were in a large paved court like a public square, facing the east and the sun, which bathed it in cool bright light. It was still early in the morning. Innumerable windows looked down upon us, and a number of doorways led into the building on all sides. From one of these a girl stepped forward. Edvar spoke to her, evidently reporting himself and Selda. The

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girl pushed several buttons on a small cabinet which hung from her shoulder. It rang, low and silvery, twice. Then she pointed to me.

"Who is that?" she asked.

"His name is Baret," Edvar told her. "I was sent to meet him."

"But where is he from? He is not registered."

"We don't know. It's an unusual circumstance, he explained, while the girl examined us all carefully. "Very well," she said finally, "you must attend him until he is registered. I'll notify Odom." Edvar nodded, and we turned away.

Glancing back as we crossed the court, I saw the ship descending noiselessly, on the square of pavement where it had landed, into the depths of the building, while the girl made other gestures with her little cabinet. Then we passed through a doorway into the subdued glow of artificial lighting.

"Why was she so worried?" I asked Edvar. "I don't understand anything, you know."

"You were not registered," he said. "We are all registered, of course, in our own cities. The authorities know where to find us at any moment of the day during our routine. If we leave the city, or depart from our usual program, naturally we note down where we are going, registering ourselves upon our departure and upon our return. If we visit another city, our arrival there is expected and reported here, as well as our departure."

"Is all that necessary?" I asked him. "Is there a war, perhaps?"

"No," he said, "it's customary. It prevents confusion. Everything we do is recorded. This conversation, for instance, is being recorded in the telepathic laboratory at this moment—each of us has a record there. They are open to the public at any time. It makes dishonor impossible."

We paused at a doorway, and Edvar spoke a word. It opened noiselessly and we went into his apartment.

"We are assigned to you this morning," Edvar said. "We are at your service."

THE apartment was hardly very different from what I had unconsciously expected. It seemed to have two rooms and a bath. The room we entered was a sort of study. It was hung with drapes closely woven from some light metal, with cold designs that were suggestive of mechanical, mathematic conceptions, but inspiring in much the way that the lines of the building were inspiring. There were no pictures and no mirrors. All the furniture was made in straight lines, of metal, and somewhat futuristic

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in design. The chairs, however, were deep and comfortable, although the yielding upholstery appeared at first sight hard and brittle as metal sheets. The room was perfectly bare, and the color scheme a dull silver and black. To me it seemed extremely somber, but it pleased Edvar and his companion.

The first thing I noted when we sat down was the absence of any small articles—books or papers or lamps—and I remarked on this, somewhat rudely perhaps, to Edvar.

"Whatever you wish is accessible," he explained with a smile. He rose and went to the draped wall. Drawing back the folds of the curtains in several places, he showed the metal wall covered with dials and apparatus. I noted especially a small screen, like a motion picture screen. Later I was to find that it served not only for amusement, showing sound-pictures projected automatically from a central office, but also for news and for communication, like a telephone.

"Would you care for breakfast?" Edvar asked me. I accepted eagerly, and he manipulated some dials on the wall. A moment or two later a small section of the wall opened, and a tray appeared. Edvar placed it on the table by my chair.

"We have had our breakfast," he explained, and I began to eat with a keener appetite than I thought I had. It was a simple meal with a slightly exotic flavor, but without any strange dishes. During the course of it, I asked Edvar questions.

"Your life is amazingly centralized," I said. "Apparently all the things you need are supplied at your rooms on a moment's notice."

"Yes," he smiled, "it makes life simpler. We have very few needs. Many of them are satisfied while we sleep, such as cleansing and, if we like, nourishment. We can study while we sleep, acquiring facts that we may want to use later from an instrument which acts upon the subconscious mind. These dials you see are mainly to give us pleasure. If we care to have our meals served in the old-fashioned way, as you are having yours, we can do so, but we reserve those meals for the occasions when we feel the need of eating as a pure sensation. We can have music at any time—" He paused. "Would you care for some music?"

"There's nothing I'd like better," I told him. He went to the wall and turned the dials again. In a moment the room was filled with the subdued sound of a cool, melancholy music—Grieg, or some other composer, with whom I was unfamiliar, exotic and reminiscent in mood, cool, and quiet with a touch of acutely sweet

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pain. I listened to it in silence for a while. It was so subtle and pervasive, however, that it seemed to play directly upon the subconscious mind, so that the listener could go on thinking and talking uninterruptedly without losing any of the feeling of the melody.

HAVE you no private possessions?" I asked. "Things that you share with no one? Your own books, your own music, your own jewelry, perhaps?"

"We have no need of them," he replied. After a moment's thought, he added, "We have our own emotions, and our own work —that's all. We do not care for jewels, or for decoration for its own sake. The things we use and see daily are beautiful in themselves, through their perfect utility and their outward symbolism of utility and creation. Our tools and our furniture are beautiful according to our own conceptions of beauty—as you can see." He made a gesture about the room.

"And who serves you with those meals, and the music, and the knowledge you learn in your sleep? Who does the work?"

"We all do the work. Each of us has his own work. Each of us is a craftsman and a creative artist. The real work is done by machine —our machines are the basic structure of our life. But we have men, highly trained and fitted temperamentally for their professions, who watch and direct the machines. It is a matter of a few hours a day, devoted to fine problems in mechanics or building or invention. The rest of our time is our own, and the machines go on moving automatically as we have directed them to move. If every man on earth should die this morning, it would be perhaps fifty years or a century before the last machine stopped turning."

"And the rest of the time?"

It was Selda who answered this time. "We live. We devote ourselves to learning and creative thought. We study human relations, or we wander through the forests and the mountains, increasing the breadth and significance of our minds and emotions." Selda's voice, rising suddenly after her long silence, startled me, and I looked at her, disturbed again by some subtle attraction exercised over me by her body. We were silent a while, then I relapsed into my inner questionings, and turned to Edvar.

"You must live under a sort of socialistic system," I said thoughtfully. "Even a sort of communism?"

"In a sense. Rather it is an automatic life. The soul of the machine pervades us all, and the machines are beautiful. Our lives are logically and inevitably directed by environment and he-

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redity just as the machines are inevitably directed by their functions and capabilities. When a child is born, we know already what he will do throughout his life, how long he will live, what sort of children he will have, the woman he will marry. The Bureau could tell you at this moment when my great-grandson will be born, when he will die, and what his life will do for the State. There are never any accidents in our lives."

BUT how did you develop so highly technical a civilization?" I asked.

"We came to it gradually from the last government system. It was called the *phrenarchic system*—the rule of the mind. It was neither democracy nor monarchy nor dictatorship. We found that we could tell the temperament and characteristics of a child from his early years, and we trained certain children for government. They were given power according to the qualities of their minds and according to the tasks for which they were fitted. We even bred them for governing. Later, when the machine began to usurp the place of labor all over the world and gave men freedom and peace and beauty, the task of government dwindled away little by little, and the phrenarchs turned gradually to other occupations."

I LEARNED innumerable details of that life from Edvar, and occasionally Selda would add some fact. They are not important now. It is the narrative which I must tell, not the details of a social system which, as I would discover later, was purely hypothetical.

The three of us spent the morning in conversation there, until the entrance of another man I had not seen before. He came in without knocking, but Edvar and Selda did not seem to be surprised. He was the representative of the Bureau.

"You are Baret?" he said, looking at me keenly.

"Yes," I replied.

"I have been directed to tell you that your visit here is temporary, and that you will be returned to your previous life at the end of a certain period of time which we have not yet calculated precisely. You have been registered with the Bureau, and you are free to come and go as you see fit, but you are not to interfere with anything you see. You are an observer. You will be expected to comply with our methods of living as Edvar or Selda will explain them to you."

With a slight bow, he turned to go. But I detained him.

"Wait," I said. "Can you tell me who I am, and where I've come from?"

"We are not yet certain. Our

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knowledge of you has come to us in an unusual manner, through a series of new experiments now being conducted at the Bureau. If possible, we will explain them to you later. In any case you may be assured that your absence from your usual life will not cause you any harm, and that you will return after a definite time. Rest here, and keep your mind at peace. You will be safe."

Then he turned and left. I was puzzled for a while, but I forgot that shortly in the strangeness and wonder of the life I was living in a strange world. . . .

AND the lake? Melbourne?

The Grieg nocturne came to an end. I frowned as I set down my razor, and went into the living room to change the record. Conflicting memories . . . where did they meet? On the one hand was the awakening in the cold waters of the lake—only an hour or less than an hour ago. And there was Melbourne, and the strange conversation at the Club. Finally there was this amazing and isolated recollection, like a passage from a dream.

Suddenly, as I went back to my bath and plunged into the cool water, my mind returned to Melbourne. I had been walking home with him that night from the Club—perhaps last night. We had gone on a while in silence, both of us thinking. Then we had come to the Drive. At that moment Melbourne had said something—what was it?

He had said, "Tell me, Mr. Barrett, would you care to see that dream of yours come true?"

The Chamber of Life

I DIDN'T know what Melbourne meant, and I looked at him inquiringly.

He explained: "I have in my home a model—or rather a complete test-apparatus. It was finished only a few days ago. I have been postponing my trial of it from day to day, afraid that it might be a failure—although, of course, it can't be. I have verified my work dozens of times, step by step.

"If you care to see it, I should be glad to have you come with me. Now that I have reached the end of my search, I need someone to share my triumph with me." I glanced at him eagerly, but hardly understanding that his offer was serious.

"But, Mr. Melbourne," I said, "why have you chosen me—a man you've only met this evening?" He smiled.

"I am a lonely man, almost a recluse, Mr. Barrett," he answered. "I have many friends in many countries—but no intimates. It is the penalty of a man's devotion to one single and absorbing task. And, too, I think

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you share a little of my interest in this particular task."

"I do, sir! It has fascinated me," I said.

"Then come along. I shall soon be an old man, and I will need someone to carry on this work as I should carry it on. Perhaps you will be that man."

A taxi was coming up the Drive at that moment. Melbourne hailed it, and held the door for me to enter. Then he gave the driver an address which I didn't hear, and climbed in after me.

"This will be quicker," he said. "After all, I am more excited about it myself than I should care to admit."

As we turned and went on up the Drive, he told me more about his invention.

"I call it the Chamber of Life," he said. "It's a fantastic name, but it designates precisely what my instrument is.

"You see, it's like living another life to experience an hour or two in the Chamber. You cannot possibly realize yet just what it's like. I have created a means of reproducing all the sensations that a man would have in actual living; all the sounds, the odors, the little feelings that are half-realized in daily life—everything. The Chamber takes possession of you and lives for you. You forget your name, your very existence in this world, and you are taken bodily into a fictitious land. It is like actually living the books you would read today, or the motion pictures and plays you would watch and hear.

"It is as real as life, but it moves swiftly as a dream. You seem to pass through certain things slowly and completely, in the *tempo* of life. Then, when the transitional moment comes, between the scenes, your sensations pass with unbelievable rapidity. The Chamber has possession of your mind. It tells you that you are doing such and such a thing, it gives you all the feeling of doing that thing, and you actually believe you are doing it. And when it snatches you away from one day and takes you into the next, it has only to make you feel that a day has passed, and it is as though you had lived through that day. You could live a lifetime in this way, in the Chamber, without spending actually more than a few hours."

THE taxi turned a corner, leaving the Drive, and plunged into a maze of side streets. I didn't notice particularly where we were going, because I was utterly absorbed in everything Melbourne said. The city, along the upper part of the Drive, is filled with streets that twist and turn crookedly, like New York's Greenwich Village. It has always puzzled me to know how the residents ever find their way home at

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night—especially when they are returning from parties. I suppose they manage it somehow—perhaps by signs cut in the trees, like primitive Indians.

"Even after I had worked out the machine," Melbourne continued, "it was a year's job to put together a record for a thorough trial. That was a matter of synchronization like your talking pictures, except that everything had to be synchronized—taste touch as well as sound and vision. And thought-processes had to be included. I had this advantage, however—that I could record everything by a process of pure imagination, as I shall explain later, just as everything is received directly through the mind. And I worked out a way of going back and cutting out the extraneous impressions. Even so, it was all amazingly complicated.

"I've gotten around the difficulties of this, my first record, by avoiding a story of ordinary life. Indeed, what I have made is hardly a story at all. You can readily see how hard it would have been to use the medley of noises in traffic, or the infinite variety of subtle country-sounds. Instead, I made a story of an ideal life as I have visioned it—the future, if you like, or the life on another planet."

At this moment we turned into a dark driveway and skirted a large lawn for several hundred yards, up to Melbourne's home. It was a large house, dark at the moment, like the colonial houses you see in Virginia—the real ones, not the recent imitations that consist of little except the spotless white columns, which Jefferson adopted from the Greeks.

WE went up some steps to a wide porch as the taxi drove away, and Melbourne unlocked the door. The hall inside was a hint of quiet, fine furnishings, with the note of simplicity that marks real taste. Melbourne himself took my hat, and put it away meticulously with his own in a cloak-room at the end of the hall. Then he led me up the stairs, deeply carpeted, to his study. I glanced around the study with interest, but I saw nothing that could, conceivably, have been what he called the Chamber of Life.

"It's not here, Mr. Barrett," he said, noticing my eagerness with a smile, "we'll go to it in a moment. I thought you might care for a highball first." From a closet he selected a bottle of Scotch, some soda, and glasses. Before he poured the whisky, he removed a small box from a cabinet, opened it, and extracted two small capsules. He dropped one of them into each glass.

"This is a harmless drug," he explained. "It will paralyze some

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of the nerves of your body so that you won't feel the chair you'll be sitting in nor any extraneous sensation that might interfere with the impressions you must get from the instrument. It's a sort of local anesthetic." He handed me my glass.

We drank the highballs rather hastily, and rose. Melbourne went to a door at one end of the room and opened it, switching on a light. Following him, I looked past the doorway into a small room something like the conception I had of the control-room in a submarine. It was a small chamber with metal walls. It had no windows, and only the one door through which we entered.

Around the walls were a series of cabinets with innumerable dials, switches, wires, and tiny radio tubes. It was like a glorified radio, but there were no loud speakers and no ear-phones. Two very deep and comfortable chairs stood side by side in the center of the room.

"The experience will be very simple," Melbourne said softly. "I'm not going into any detail about this instrument until we see how it works. I may as well explain, though, that the room is absolutely sound-proof, so that no trace of noises outside can enter it. Furthermore, I maintain it at an even body temperature. These precautions are to prevent interference with the sound impressions and the heat and cold stimuli of the instrument. That is the only reason we have to be confined here in this room, because it is especially adapted to the reception of these impressions.

"The instrument, you see, like a radio, is operative at a distance. I am going to test you in a moment for your wavelength. When I have that, and set the instrument, you could receive the story, so far as I know, anywhere in the world. No receiving set is necessary, for it acts directly upon the brain. But you must have these ideal conditions for pure reception."

I SEATED myself in one of the chairs, yawning a little. Melbourne, working at the dials, noticed my yawn and observed approvingly.

"That's good. The more deadened your body is to real sensations—the nearer it is to sleep—the better and more vivid will be your impressions." He pressed several buttons, and twisted a dial with sensitive fingers.

"Now, concentrate for a moment on the word *Venus*," he directed. I did so, and shortly I heard a faint humming which rose within the instrument. Then Melbourne turned a switch with a nod of satisfaction, and the humming ceased.

"That gave me your wave-

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length," he explained. "I have set it for my own as well—I can broadcast at one time two or more different lengths. I can broadcast more than one part in the drama, too. Whereas you, for instance, will be the man waking up in a strange world in the record we are going to receive, I have connected my wavelength to receive the emotions and the sensations of the girl, Selda."

He came forward to the other chair, and sat down.

"Everything is in readiness now," he said. "When I press this button on the arm of my chair, the lights will go out. A moment later we shall be under the stimulus of the machine. I don't think anything can happen." He smiled. "If anything does, and you are conscious enough to know it, you can call my butler by means of an electrical device I have perfected simply by speaking his name, Peter, in an ordinary conversational voice. But I don't see how anything can go wrong."

We reached for each other's hands, and shook them quietly.

"Good luck," I said. "The outcome of this means almost as much to me as it does to you." With another smile, Melbourne answered:

"Good luck to you, then, too."

At that moment the lights went off, and we sat there a few moments in total darkness. . . .

Remembering this scene, as I bathed that morning when I came out of the lake, I began to understand more clearly what had happened to me. Evidently, then, it *had* been last night that I saw Melbourne, and the strange other-life I had been recalling earlier had been the experience in the Chamber of Life.

But there was more yet. My mind raced back to the awakening on the hill, and to the landing in the city of Richmond. I remembered the conversation with Edvar in his apartment, the place where I had left off and gone back to my recollections of Melbourne.

Now, as I stepped out of the tub and dried myself and dressed, I returned mentally to the curious, mythical adventure in the mythical city. It was still impossible for me to feel that it was unreal, it had been so vivid, so clear.

Baret and Selda

I REMEMBER that I lived nearly two months—or so it seemed—in that other world. I was assigned an apartment near to Edvar's—Selda was between us. Edvar instructed me in the details of the life I was to lead. But he was a rather cold sort: his interests were ancient history and archeology, and he would spend his mornings at work in the Library of History or in his

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study, the rest of his time flying about the world on curious expeditions of discovery—examining the soil, I suppose, and investigating the customs and records of other cities.

Selda devoted most of her time to me. It was she who took me from place to place, showing me the natural beauties of that world. There were, you see, not only gentle slopes and hill-tops. There were mountainous crags as high and as wild as the Alps, forests as impenetrably deep and still as the jungles of the Amazon, and rivers that rushed and tumbled over rocks, or fell for thousands of feet from mountain cliffs.

The first time I went with her, she took me to a gigantic peak that overlooked the sea. There was, of course, a small level place for the airship to land. We left it there, and climbed on foot the last hundred yards or so. Our way lay through the heavy snow, but it was not too cold to be more than gloriously bracing, exhilarating. We wore our usual costume of trunks and tunic.

We stood at the top and looked out over the grandest horizon I had ever seen. To the east there lay the sea, deep and very blue in the sunlight. The shore was just a dark line far away and below us. There was a long strip of grass and field bordering the sea for miles, and behind that the forest. Toward the north, the mountains crept out from under the forest and moved down to the sea, rising until they became a vast wilderness of cliffs and rocks, and hid the sea, with peak after peak rising as far as the eye could reach into the snow and the mist. Then the hills sloped down westward into a series of wooded valleys, through which ran the wide river I had seen at my awakening, coming down from the mountains and through the valleys until it flattened broadly out into the low plains in the south and moved eastward to the sea. Everywhere in the valleys and over the plains, I knew that cities were scattered, lonely and tall like the one they called Richmond. But we were so high in the mountains that they were invisible to us—perhaps a keen eye could have found them, tiny white dots crouching upon the earth.

I turned to Selda—and caught my breath. The wind, swooping up from the sea, whipped her thin covering against her body and fluttered it like the swift wings of a butterfly behind her. Her short, dark hair, too, was lifted and blown back from her forehead, revealing the clean, soft profile of her face. I had never seen a girl who stood so clean, so straight. I watched her until she turned, too, and met my eyes. In them I thought I de-

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tected something startled and unfathomable.

"My God!" I cried across the wind, "you are beautiful!" She frowned a little, but her eyes still looked searchingly into mine. I stepped forward, facing her. But I didn't touch her. I was afraid to touch anything so clean.

"You belong here, Selda," I added. "The wind is a part of you, and the mountains, and the sea. You shouldn't have to live in the midst of all those people in the city. You belong here." She smiled faintly, looking up at me.

"You belong here more than I do, Baret," she said. "You came to us, not from the city, but from the hills."

WE stood there, examining each other's eyes, for a long while. I wanted to take her in my arms, but I didn't. I looked away at last, back at the sea, puzzled and disturbed. I had never been aware of anything so fine as this before, nor of anything so painful. Suddenly I found myself wanting to be something, to do something—not for myself, but for her. It was strange.

"Come," she said at last, "we had better go back."

"I'd like to stay here forever," I answered moodily, glancing around a last time at the versatile horizon.

"So would I," she admitted. Then, in a low voice, she added, "But one can't. One has to follow one's program."

We returned to the airship, and rose into the cool, thin air. I stood behind her on the way back, watching her slender body as she guided the plane. Once in a while she would turn her head and look up at me over her shoulder, then quickly look away again.

"Why is it," I asked her as we passed over the valleys and the river on our way home, "why is it that these hills have such a cultivated look—as though they had been laid out?" She glanced back, and smiled.

"They *have* been laid out," she said. "The hills, and the rivers, and the tallest mountains have all been constructed by our landscape artists in order to achieve their various effects. Even the line of the sea has been determined and arranged by the artists."

"But why?" I said. "Wasn't it a frightful waste of energy?"

"It didn't seem so to us," she answered. "We had no further need to cultivate the land except in small patches, when we learned the secret of artificial food. And we wanted to have perfect beauty about us. So we remodeled the outlines of the earth, and eliminated the insects and the harmful animals and the weeds. We made the land clean and fine as it had never been before."

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"It must have been a terrific labor."

"It pleased us. Our instinct is to arrange and remodel things, to order our life so that we know what it is and what it will always be." She paused for a moment, and added in a low voice, "One is necessarily a determinist here."

We said no more until our arrival in Richmond.

It is not my purpose to detail here all that happened during the time I spent on that world. Most of it had to do with Selda, and our daily expeditions about the world. This is not, after all, a love story, but the account of a very strange experience; and, too, none of it was real.

During my last week, a series of strange moods and happenings complicated my life. One day, after a visit to the sea with Selda, we were walking back to our plane across the sand. Without any warning, surrounded by the brilliant morning sunlight and the miles of sea and beach, I struck my knee against something hard and immovable, and, flinging out my hand to catch myself from falling, I clung to a hard surface like an iron railing. For a moment I was stunned and confused. The sunlight seemed to fade, and there was a vague hint of darkness all about me, with black walls looming up on all sides. It was as though I stood in two worlds at once, transfixed between night and day. Then the darkness went away, the sunlight brightened. I looked around, and found Selda watching me curiously, a little alarmed.

"What happened, Baret?" she asked, puzzled. I shook my head in bewilderment.

"I seemed to stumble—" I said. There was nothing underfoot but the soft sand, and where I had flung my hand against a sort of railing, there was nothing either. We went back to the airship in silence, both of us confused.

AFTER that, with increasing frequency, there would come interruptions, like iron bars striking dark, jagged holes in the tissue of life. From time to time I heard inexplicable noises—the whirring of motors, the skid-skid of tires on invisible streets, the rumble of carts around corners of a world where there were no carts. Again and again those moments of confusion would come over me, when I seemed to be looking into two worlds at once, one superimposed upon the other, one bright, the other dark with faint points of light in the distance. Once, walking along the corridor beyond my room in Richmond, I collided with a man. For a moment the corridor faded completely. I stood on a street with dark houses about me. Overhead was the glow of a street-

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lamp, and a milk-cart was just rattling away around a corner. A man with a frightened face stood before me, his hat on the pavement, his eyes staring. We looked at each other in astonishment. I started to speak. Then he reached for his hat quickly, and brushed by me, muttering close to my ear.

"For God's sake, look where you're going. . . ."

I stood in the corridor again, staring. Down the corridor, coming toward me, was a single figure—Selda. Behind me there was nobody. I went to meet Selda, dazed and uneasy. I could still hear, close to my ear, an echo of that muffled, hoarse voice that I had never heard before.

That was two days before the end. We were leaving the city on that final bright morning, when a representative of the Bureau stopped us. I looked at him inquiringly.

"I have come to tell you, Baret," he said, "that your departure is scheduled for this evening." I drew back, startled, and looked at Selda.

"My departure?" I repeated in a low voice, hardly understanding. "So soon?" I had forgotten that one day I should have to leave.

"It has been arranged," he said impersonally.

We bowed slightly to each other, and he went away. Selda and I stepped aboard our ship in silence.

That time we flew up the river until we came to the foothills of the mountains in the north. We landed in a little clearing by the river at the foot of a waterfall hundreds of feet high, towering over us. The forest stood about us on all sides, coming down to the river's brim on the opposite bank and meeting it not far from us on the near bank. The precipice, covered with moss and small bushes, stood above us.

WE sat a long while in silence, before I said bitterly: "So I must go."

She didn't look at me, but answered quietly, "Yes, you must go."

"I don't want to go," I cried, "I want to stay here!"

"Why?" she asked me, averting her face.

"Don't you know?" I said swiftly. "Haven't you understood long ago that I love you?" She shook her head.

"Love is something that we don't know here—not until we have been married and lived with our men. Sometimes not then." But she looked at me, and I thought there were tears in her eyes. Suddenly the impulse I had been resisting ever since the morning on the moun-

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tain became insupportable, and I caught her in my arms almost roughly. Her face was close to mine, and she closed her eyes. I kissed her, forgetting everything but the knowledge that I had stumbled upon the sort of love that doesn't pass away, no matter how long a man lives.

After a while, though, she drew away as if she resisted not my desire, but her own.

"No—" she said in a low voice, "no. . . ."

"But Selda!" I stammered, "I love you—I want to marry you." She shook her head.

"No," she said again, "didn't you understand? I am scheduled to marry Edvar."

At first I didn't know what she meant.

"Scheduled?" I repeated dully. "I don't understand."

"It has been arranged for years. Don't you remember what Edvar told you about our marriages here, the very first day you came? I was destined to marry Edvar long before any of us were born, before our parents, even, were born. It's the way they order our lives."

"But I love you," I cried in amazement. "And you love me, too. I know you love me."

"That means nothing here," she said. "It happens sometimes. One has to accept it. Nothing can be done. We live according to the machinery of the world. Everything is known and predetermined."

SUDDENLY, in the midst of what she was saying, close behind me there sounded even above the roaring of the waterfall a raucous noise like the hooting of a taxi horn. It was followed by a shrieking of brakes, and a hoarse voice near by shouted something angry and profane. A rush of air swept by me, and I heard faintly the sound of a motor moving away, with a grinding of gears. I looked at Selda.

"Did you hear that?"

She nodded, with wide, frightened eyes. "Yes. It's not the first time." Suddenly she rose, frowning, as if with pain. "Come," she added, "now we must go back."

There was nothing else to do. We went back silently to the airship, and turned its nose toward the city.

But when I left her at her apartment, promising to see her later, I had one last hope in my mind. I went to the Bureau.

The Bureau was a vast system of halls and offices, occupying two floors of the great building. I was sent from one automatic device to another—there were no human clerks—in search of the representative who had spoken to me before. Finally I found him in his apartment,

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down the corridor only a hundred feet or so from my own. He was pouring over a metal sheet on his table, where innumerable shifting figures were thrown by some hidden machine, and he was calculating with a set of hundreds of buttons along its edges. He spoke to me without pausing or looking up, and throughout my interview he continued with his figuring as if it had been entirely automatic —as perhaps it was.

"What is it, Baret?" he said I felt like a small child before the principal of the school.

"I have come to ask you whether it is necessary for me to go," I answered. He nodded slightly, never looking up.

"It is necessary," he said. "Your visit was pre-arranged and definite." I made a gesture of remonstrance.

"But I don't want to go," I insisted. "I like this place, and I am willing to fall into its life if I can remain under any conditions."

"It is impossible," he objected angrily.

"I have never been told why or how I came here. You said you would tell me that."

"I have never been told myself. It is a matter known to the men who handled it."

"If I went to them, surely they could find some way to let me stay?"

"No," he said coldly, "the thing was as definite as every event that takes place here. We do not let things happen haphazardly. We do not alter what has been arranged. And even if it were possible to let you stay —which I am inclined to doubt —they would not permit it."

WHY not?" I asked dully.

"Because there is no place for you. Our social system has been planned for hundreds of years ahead. Every individual of today and every individual of the next six generations has his definite place, his program, his work to do. There is no place for you. It is impossible to fit you in, for you have no work, no training, no need that you can fill. You have no woman, and there are no women for your children or your children's children. You are unnecessary. To fit you in, one would have to disrupt the whole system for generations ahead. It is impossible."

I thought a moment, hopelessly.

"If I made a place?" I suggested. "Suppose I took someone else's place?" He smiled, a faint, cold smile.

"Murder? It is impossible. You are always under the control of the Bureau in some way, whether you are aware of it or not."

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I TURNED away, a little dazed. The whole thing was inevitable and clear as he put it. I knew there was nothing to be done.

I left his apartment, and went down the corridor to the landing stage. No one interfered with my movements, and my commands were not questioned. I ordered a plane, and gave my name to the girl in charge.

"Your destination?" she asked.

"I said, "I am only going for pleasure."

"Your return?"

"Expect me in an hour."

I had watched Selda pilot the planes for so many weeks that I was familiar with the controls. I rose swiftly, circled the building, and headed north toward the mountains. I hadn't the courage to see Selda again. It was only a little while before I came to the place by the river where we had spent the morning. I slowed down, and flew over it, just above the waterfall.

There was a landing-spot by the river just beyond the top of the fall. I came to rest there, and left the machine.

I stood looking at the river for a moment. I don't remember that any thoughts or emotions came to my mind. I simply stood there, a little dazed, and very quiet, with a vague picture of Selda before my eyes. It was a dream-like moment.

Then I slipped over the river's bank, into the water, and the swift current, catching me up and whirling me around dizzily, carried me toward the edge of the waterfall.

And So to Work

I GLANCED at the clock on the mantel. It was five minutes to eight: time to leave, if I was to get a decent breakfast before I went to the office. I found an old hat in the closet and put it on. It would do until I had time to buy another.

Last night—and this morning. Last night, after supper, I had dropped by the Club for a drink. And met Melbourne. This morning I woke in the water of the lake, and came home, and dressed. And went to work. Twelve hours—and in that time I had lived two months. I had fallen in love, and died. Now I must go to work.

As I left the apartment, and turned west away from the Drive, toward the street cars, I was whistling over and over a brief snatch of music. Was it Grieg? Or some composer never heard on earth?

There were people on the street now. They went by with frowning, intent faces—on their way to work. And cars rolling

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by, pausing at the cross streets with little squealings of brakes.

Everything was so simple now. I went over it all as I waited for the street car, and as I rode down town. It was strange that Melbourne had never foreseen that one possibility among so many.

We had sat down in our chairs, and then the adventure had begun. I had felt the sensation of moving about, of going from place to place. When I was a child I used to have dreams of walking about the house and about the streets. I would wake up on the stairs, or at the door—sleep-walking. Reflexes did it. I had left the chair, under the influence of the story in the Chamber of Life, and gone out of the room. I remembered now all those brief moments, when I had seemed poised on the brink of the real world—the stumbling against some hard object, the face under the street-lamp, the taxi, the voices. I had been going through the dark streets, with closed eyes, going toward the Drive—sleep-walking. And when I slipped over the bank of the river, in the dream, and down into the water—in reality I had gone over the side of the Drive, and down into the cold lake.

It had been dawn.

I LEFT the car, and walked down the street, lost in the midst of the crowds hurrying about me. It was all over, gone like one of those old dreams of my childhood. I could never forget it—never forget Selda—but it was gone. It had never existed. It had been cruel of Melbourne, cruel and ironic, to put Selda in the dream. But perhaps he had never realized that it would last over into reality.

I had no hope of seeing her again, even in the Chamber. I knew I could never find Melbourne's home: I had paid no attention to the way the taxi-driver took. And I wasn't very much interested now. It was only a dream. I had lost the only girl I had ever loved, in a dream.

I pushed open the door of the Norfolk Lunch. It was late—I had only a little while for breakfast. I sat down at one of the tables, and spoke to the waiter in much the usual manner.

"Hello, Joe. I'm in a hurry—bring me bacon and eggs, as usual."

"Coffee, Mr. Barrett?"

"Yes, coffee too. And hurry it up."

It wouldn't do to be late at the office, where I, too, was a maker of sometimes cruel dreams.

THE END

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Unto Us a Child

By DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.

Illustrated by MOREY

A Classic Reprint From AMAZING STORIES, July, 1933

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

As the first science fiction magazine, AMAZING STORIES, *with its early emphasis upon scientific credibility, opened the door to the exploration by writers of the frontiers of science.*

Suddenly, in Feb., 1928, a new writer appeared in AMAZING STORIES *with an approach so different that overnight he reared as a giant among science fiction writers. That writer was a 47-year-old doctor, David H. Keller, M.D., who had been writing steadily since he was 12 years old and only now had succeeded in selling his first story! Other writers were concerned with the new advances and adventures that scientific research and the future would bring. He was concerned with what the scientific discoveries of the future would do to human beings.*

His first science fiction story, The Revolt of the Pedestrians, *dealt with a world where comfort, luxury, excessive use of automobiles and other forms of transport had made walking obsolete and the lower limbs of most people had atrophied.*

The themes that followed were completely different from anything the science fiction world had experienced: Stenographer's Hands (AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY) *Fall, 1928 tells what happens when giant corporations begin breeding humans for their stenographic ability;* The Psychophonic Nurse (AMAZING STORIES, *Nov., 1928) is a parable wherein a machine replaces a child's mother;* White Collars (AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, *Summer, 1929) delineates the*

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is Born

uprising of the underpaid clerical and semi-professional classes and its effect upon civilization; Free As Air (AMAZING STORIES, *June, 1931*) *portrays what happens when the United States Supreme Court rules that a man owns all the air above his property as well as the ground beneath, and air travel is no longer open to the public.*

Keller was writing for a living and wrote prolifically. Each of his stories was a serious commentary on humanity. Withal his humanist slant, his idea of what technical changes would occur in future progress and invention was uncanny in its precise accuracy.

A remarkably complete picture of a probable future society is presented in a very short space in Unto Us a Child is Born. *The implications of what can happen to the individual in even a benevolent regimented society is conveyed with incredible impact, yet not a single thing happens to anyone in the story that is not "good." This masterpiece of science fiction has been reprinted only once since its initial publication in the July, 1933, issue of* AMAZING STORIES, *that was in a limited edition of 1,000 copies of David H. Keller's book* Life Everlasting and Other Tales of Science, Fantasy and Horror, *published in 1947.*

Foreword

THE Earl of Birkenhead in his recent book, THE WORLD in 2030, gives his idea of the life of that time and presents his opinion of the changes which will take place in the very short space of a hundred years.

Even more remarkable than his conceptions is the fact that the words are the sober statements of a prominent scientist and sociologist. They are not uttered with the fantastic manner and pseudo-scientific language of some of our modern prophets, but in a dull prosaic delivery.

The reader is forced, by the very manner in which the subject is presented, to feel that such changes in our social and economic life may take place. After all, they are not really

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different, in the wonder element, from the changes of the last one hundred years.

Yet, throughout the reading of this prophecy, the student of human relations is forced to feel, with a certain uneasiness, that the author has become so intent upon the marvelous, that he has tended to overlook the fact that the people of 2030, in spite of every scientific gain, will still be human beings, and that certain of their reactions will be very similar to those of their ancestors.

So we can well ask ourselves just what these people of this new year of 2030 will be thinking, just how they will be reacting to the changes of a superscientific era? Will the emotions be wiped out? or will men and women still react to beauty, the love of life, the fear of death, and the clinging fingers of a little child?

Jacob Hubler, seventh of that name and direct descendant of that Jacobus Hubelaire, who had emigrated from Strassburg to Pennsylvania in 1740, had at last earned for himself a very satisfactory place in life. As Government Official, Class D, Division 7, No. 4829, Gross Number 25978432, he was now entitled to maintenance of the 5th type, which station made a man feel very comfortable.

He had earned that position by his inventions which made possible the artificial production of all food supplies in the individual home. Prior to his work in this dietary field, large laboratories in every city had produced synthetic food and meats, grown in large test tubes. The method was adequate in every way to the needs of the populace, but the manner of distribution was still antiquated. Hubler perfected a small but complete production laboratory, not much larger than the electric refrigerators of the past century. His product in its preparation was entirely automatic and practically foolproof. It would generate, day by day, and year by year, a complete and attractive food supply for a family of two. It not only created the food, but there was an auxiliary machine which prepared it for the table in any form desired by the consumer. All that was necessary was the selection of one of the twenty-five menus and the pressing of the proper control button.

The inventions became very popular with the type of women who still took pride in their life; and when he added a service unit which automatically served the meal, removed it and washed the dishes, it was more than most women could resist. Thousands of women ceased to eat at the community restaurants

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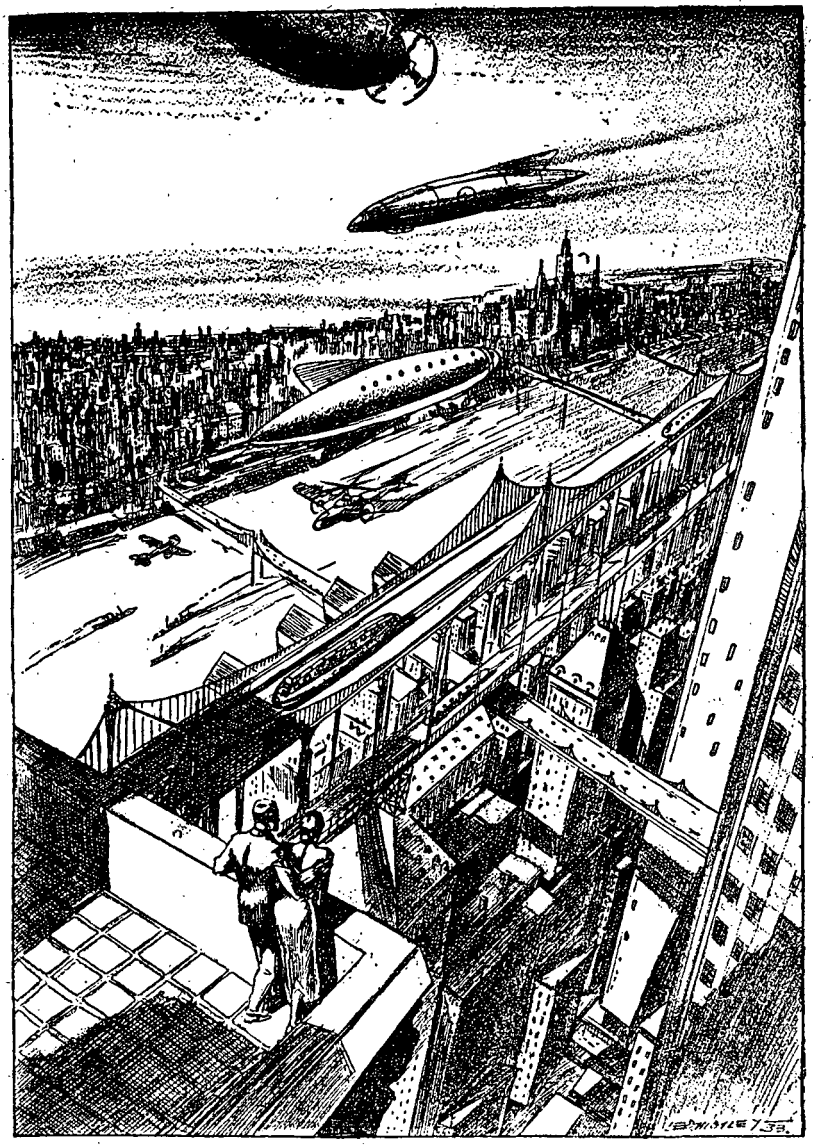

Jacob and Ruth went out on the balcony of their apartment. It was on the two hundredth story and overlooked Greater New York. They stood there, and somehow, his arm stole around her waist and her head dropped on his shoulder.

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and accepted home meals as an ultra-refinement. Hubler's name became a household shibboleth. The woman, who had his three units in her home, could serve three meals a day with no greater effort than the pressing of fifteen push buttons. It was ability as an inventor that placed Hubler in Class D, Division 7. The promotion carried with it certain rewards. It entitled him to complete support for the rest of his life, and it gave him the right to prolong that life to the age of one hundred and fifty years if he so desired. Most valuable of all, it gave him permission to marry.

Laws, Laws and More Laws

YEARS before, the State, realizing the important value of recent discoveries, passed laws which made the nation, rather than the individual, the sole owner and beneficiary of all inventions, especially those pertaining to the comfort of the individual, the welfare of the Commonwealth and the prolongation of life. Thus, the age of usefulness was rapidly advanced to an average expectancy of one hundred and fifty years, but only those who, by their performances, showed that they were of real value to the nation, were allowed to live on.

Similarly, the right to marry and have one child was carefully guarded by the State. Strict laws of biogenesis had been followed for three generations, and, as a result, the prisons and the hospitals for the abnormals had been made useless. These had been converted into nurseries and adolescent homes. Thus, a man and woman, under the most strict supervision, could marry and have one child, but only the most worthy were accorded that right.

However, if a man showed a real value to the nation, and it was determined that his child would also be of value, then he was allowed to marry, provided a suitable and scientifically proper woman could be found for his wife. No couple could have a second child till the first one had reached maturity and had been found to be normal in every way.

Hubler, at the age of sixty, was told that he could marry. He was rather thrilled at the news. During the last few years permits had not been plentiful. With the prolongation of life and the increase of efficiency it was found best not to have too many citizens. So, for twenty years permission to marry had been given only to the men and women of the highest type. Thus, it was really an honor to marry. Hubler talked it all over with his first assistant, Ruth Fanning. She had worked at his

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elbow for twenty-five years and was nearly as old as he was. She, too, had ambitions.

"I think that it is wonderful, Mr. Hubler," she said. "You deserve the honor if any man does. Your inventions have made women desire homes and want to spend some time in them, and what is the use of having a home without a husband and a child?"

"It is kind of you to say that, Miss Fanning," the inventor replied. "You realize that much of the work would never have been done without your help and suggestions. I am proud of the honor, but I am not at all certain that I will ever marry. Just having the right is not all. They have to find a complimentary female for me."

"Oh! You are too easily discouraged. You, no doubt, will fall into an unusual group, but there will be some women in that group, and I am sure that one of them will be glad to have you for a husband."

"I hope so," he said, rather pessimistically. As an inventor of service units for modern kitchens he was bravery personified, but when it came to marriage, why, that was something different.

He only worked an hour a day, five days a week. Nevertheless, it was thought advisable to give him a month's vacation, during which time he was to take the various examinations and prepare for married life. On the second day of his liberty, he drove his car to the Central Marriage Testing Bureau, and, with more than a slight degree of hesitation, he entered the main office with all his credentials.

The Head of the Bureau explained the procedure to him.

"This may seem very complicated to you, but, in reality, it is simple. We examine you in every way and correlate the results. We then change everything into a mathematical formula, and this works out your final classification. After that all that is necessary is to find a woman with the same classification, have you meet one another; if you desire to be husband and wife we will allow you to marry. Of course, it takes time. Even the development of your personality—the taking of pictures and their proper study takes several days."

"One question," asked Hubler. "After I am typed, do I have to marry the woman you select for me?"

"Not at all. We give you a list of the unmarried eligibles of your special type number. Any one of these you select will be satisfactory to us.

"And the old emotion, love, does not enter into it? You see, I do not know. I am only asking for information; but in one of

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the old books I have, it speaks of men and women falling in love."

The scientist looked stern.

"That is the way it used to be. That kind of love produced the feeble minded, the epileptic, the dullard, and occasionally a genius. Under the modern method the birth and maturity of an abnormal child is not possible. You want your child to be perfect, do you not?"

"Of course! What father would want anything else?"

"Then, do not allow yourself to fall in love, as your forefathers did."

Personality

FOR the next week Jacob Hubler was an interested participant in the typing of his personality and body. Since he was an inventor, every step of the process was explained to him. At last all the results were ready for the co-ordination machine. This was the one which produced the final mathematical rating. Buttons were pressed, cogwheels whirred, automatic type clicked, and at last a paper came out of the lower slot. The Head of the Bureau took it and studied it very seriously and finally said,

"Just as I thought, gentlemen; this is a new type, and I believe the one we have been anxiously looking for. It is positively new and adds a novel group to our known dominant factors. Would you like to look at it, Mr. Hubler?"

The inventor took the white pasteboard and read, TYPE, Q—GROUP, X—DIVISION, 35—***

"You notice that it is a three star card?" remarked the Head. "In the last fifty years we have had only the three star card occur nine times and no one has ever had as high a rating as 35."

"What does it mean?" asked the puzzled Hubler.

"It means that we can be certain that your child will be a philosopher, and at present the country needs one or two philosophers rather badly. Those we have are growing old and are not as inspirational as we should like them to be."

"Then I can marry and have one child?"

"No. That is the unfortunate part of it. You are a new type, and, consequently, there are no women of that type to introduce you to."

"Then my right to marry is just a hollow mockery?"

"Yes. You are so strongly dominant that it would be absolutely wrong for you to marry into another type. Still, the matter is not at all hopeless. We are making examinations every day. We may find your type any time."

"How many variations are there?"

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"Over seven millions."

"Then, I might as well go back to work."

"No, go ahead with your month's vacation. We will make a special study of the female applicants from now on, and we may be able to find one for you. We may even shade the results a trifle and give you a break. Of course, that would be pure experiment, and might result disastrously."

Thirteen days later Jacob Hubler received orders to report at once to the Marriage Bureau. The Head of the Department was all excitement. He said.

"A most unusual thing happened yesterday. We have been testing and typing a very extraordinary woman and we suspected from the preliminary examinations that something novel would result. Her license to marry was over twenty years old, but she had never been tested. She explained that by saying that the man she wanted to marry did not have a permit; so, she decided to wait for him. A month ago he received his permit; so, she decided to be typed. To our surprise, she developed the same type and group you did, the new one. The only difference is that she is a ****star person while you are a ***one. She is the only****star one we have ever had. Four stars show a wonderful mental maturity. The mating should produce the finest kind of a philosopher. We did not tell her about you. Thought it would be best to talk it over with you first. It is most unusual."

"It certainly is odd," replied the inventor. "What is her serial number?"

Ruth Fanning—the Baby

GOVERNMENT Official, Class D, Division 7, No. 4830, Gross Number, 259799987. Her name is Ruth Fanning. Ever hear of her?"

"Slightly." The inventor smiled. "That woman has been my first assistant for a number of years. I could have told you offhand, without any instrumentation, that she was a four star personality. But I never thought of marrying her."

"She is in the next room. Suppose you go in and talk matters over with her?"

Hubler was far more embarrassed than the woman who was waiting for him.

"This is a great surprise to me, Ruth," he stammered.

"It is not to me," was her calm reply. "I had an idea that it would be like this."

"And you are willing to marry me?"

"Certainly! What did you think I had been waiting for all these years? I could not marry

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you till you had a permit, and were typed, could I?"

"But how did you know we were of the same type?"

"Womanly intuition," was her smiling reply.

They told the head of the bureau that they were willing to marry. After working together it seemed the proper and natural thing to do. He gave them the proper papers, they received the general treatment and started life in a two person apartment.

The Hublers returned to their work. Life was very much the same as it had been, perhaps a little more intimate, more in unison than before, but, in a large way, not much different. They were living in a two person apartment instead of two one person apartments, but standardization had reached the point which made all apartments very much the same, irrespective of the number of occupants. They continued to work their hour a day, five days a week, spending the other hours in the pursuit of happiness and culture. After having worked together for twenty-five years, it was hard to put into effect any new or very novel social pattern of behavior.

In the course of time their child was born in a Government hospital. A serial number was tattoed on his back and he was transferred to a Government nursery, for the care of the infant was felt to be one of the most important duties of the Commonwealth. What use to produce babies one hundred percent perfect and then have everything spoiled by an untrained mother! Why entrust this most delicate period of existence to the unskilled human mother, when it could be given with perfect confidence to a perfect machine? Thus, for the first two years of a child's life, it was cared for by machinery which did everything necessary for the welfare of the young citizen and did it in a perfect and standardized manner.

The Hublers never saw the child. It was believed that much unhappiness was caused by the surplus affection of the mother; so, the law provided that in these vital years there be a complete separation of parent and child. However, reports of the growth of the child were sent by mail every month and, at the end of the first and second years, photographs were taken and sent to the Hublers. The proud parents placed these in a baby book. If they fretted over not being permitted to see their child, they did not confess it to each other; they realized the advantage of such a life to their son and were willing to make any sacrifices necessary for the future welfare of the baby.

At two years the Hubler boy

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was walking, talking and able to dress and undress himself. He had an intellectual quotient of three hundred which meant a mental age of six years. At that time he was taken out of the nursery kindergarten and placed in the grade school. There, all the teaching was done by machinery, standardized in every respect. Contact between the young pupils and older adults was rare. While there were periods of relaxation and play for the young student, life as a whole was rather serious.

The education was varied according to the predetermined future of the child. If a boy was to become a musician, why give him the preliminary training necessary for the development of a scientist? Thus, each child became a specialist early in life, and many valuable years of existence were saved.

The Hubler boy advanced rapidly. At eight years he was past the help of machine instructors. From then on he received the personal guidance of the few remaining philosophers, for it was early found that his mind was suited for philosophy and not for very much else. At ten he was a beautiful boy, but such a deep thinker about things which no one else had ever tried to think of before, that he was both a trial and an inspiration to his professors.

Twelve Years Old—The Meeting

AT the age of twelve his maturity was recognized, and it was thought advisable to give him a name, make him a full citizen and assign him to a government position. The parents were asked to select a name, and naturally, they selected Jacob Hubler, Junior. They were delighted when they were told that he had been made Assistant Professor of Philosophy in the National University, and given full citizenship. A free unit of society, he could now do as he wished with his time, the only restriction being in the hour a day five days a week rule for all government employees. The first thing he decided to do was to visit his parents.

So far they had not seen him.

But they were prepared for the happy event by moving into a three person apartment. It was very much like their two person apartment only a little larger and with an extra bedroom.

Jacob and Ruth Hubler could hardly wait for their son's arrival. They had his baby book out on the table; they wanted to tell him of their marriage, show him the reports and his baby pictures. They wanted him to know what his birth had meant to them and how they had loved him all these years. They did not look a day older than they

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looked thirteen years ago but, somehow, they felt more important and quite advanced in years.

Their boy was coming home to them!

Their son! The culmination of nearly a century.

At last, he came. A young man with a beautiful body and wonderful intelligence. He greeted them without emotion, talked to them without effort. Recognizing them as his parents, he spoke only of the debt the individual owed to the state. He was courteous and polite, but, in some way he did not seem to be interested in the things they were interested in. Jacob, Senior spoke of his new household inventions; Ruth told of her part in the work. He, the young philosopher, looked a trifle bored and talked of Erkenntnisstheorie and the undue subjectivity of temper. At last he rose from his chair.

"I Must Go to China"

I must go," he said in a tone of polite apology. "I have an important engagement with a philosopher in China. I must take the next Oriental air machine for Canton. He is an old man and it is very important that I confer with him before he dies."

The mother put her hand on his shoulder and whispered timidly.

"Won't you spend the night with us, Jacob? I made your bed myself, and your room is all ready."

"I am sorry, but I have this appointment and must go."

"Well, come again and as often as you can," said the father rather cheerily. "Always glad to see you, my boy."

Jacob and Ruth went out on the balcony of their apartment. It was on the two hundredth story and overlooked Greater New York. They stood there, and, somehow, his arm stole around her waist and her head dropped on his shoulder. He touched her cheek as he whispered.

"That is a fine boy. Sure it is great to be a father."

She shivered in his arms.

An Important Communication and the Result

I AM cold," she said. "The autumn is past and there is a chill of winter in the air. If you will pardon me, I will go to bed."

For a long time, Jacob stood there on the balcony, alone.

Once he was back in the living room he took from his pocket a Government communication. It was from the Child Permit Department.

"YOUR SON, JACOB HUBLER, JR. HAS FULFILLED IN EVERY WAY THE EXPECTATION OF HIS

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PRENATAL CHARTS. AS A PHILOSOPHER HE IS A SUCCESS. BUREAU OF STATISTICS ADVISE US THAT THEY NEED SEVERAL MORE PHILOSOPHERS. THIS LETTER IS YOUR OFFICIAL PERMIT TO HAVE ANOTHER SON. REPLY AT ONCE DESIRE OF YOUR WIFE AND SELF CONCERNING THIS."

He read it over several times. At first it seemed to be hard to understand. He had been so busy improving the standard kitchen equipment that he had given but little time to other matters. Still holding the letter in his hand he went over to the central table and opened the baby book. He looked at the first few pictures and then could not see very well because of the film over his eyes.

Closing the book he went over to the wall wireless and tapped out a letter in reply, addressed to the Child Permit Department. One sentence was the answer, one sentence and the name, and the message read,

WE WILL NOT HAVE ANY MORE CHILDREN.

JACOB HUBLER

He walked as quietly as he could to his wife's bedroom door.

Her room was dark and he could hear her sobbing in the darkness.

He went in and touched her hair.

Wanting to comfort her, he did not know what to say. The world was no longer "all before them."

(Milton.)

THE END

Now on sale in *NOVEMBER AMAZING* *BOB SHAW'S* bold new novel *ONE MILLION TOMORROW S, JACK WODHAMS: ENEMY BY PROXY, NOEL LOOMIS'* last novelet: *A TIME TO TEACH, A TIME TO LEARN, DIANETICS: THE EVOLUTION OF A SCIENCE* —a personal report by *BARRY N. MALZBERG;* and introducing a new name to science fiction magazines, *GERARD F. CONWAY: THROUGH THE DARK GLASS;* plus many other new features.

ON SALE IN DECEMBER FANTASTIC—SEPT. 29th *KEITH LAUMER'S* stunning sequel to *AXE and DRAGON: THE SHAPE CHANGER, BRIAN ALDISS: CARDIAC ARREST, R.A. LAFFERTY'S—BEEN A LONG TIME, BARRY N. MALZBERG'S—THE NEW RAPPACINI,* plus other new stories and features.

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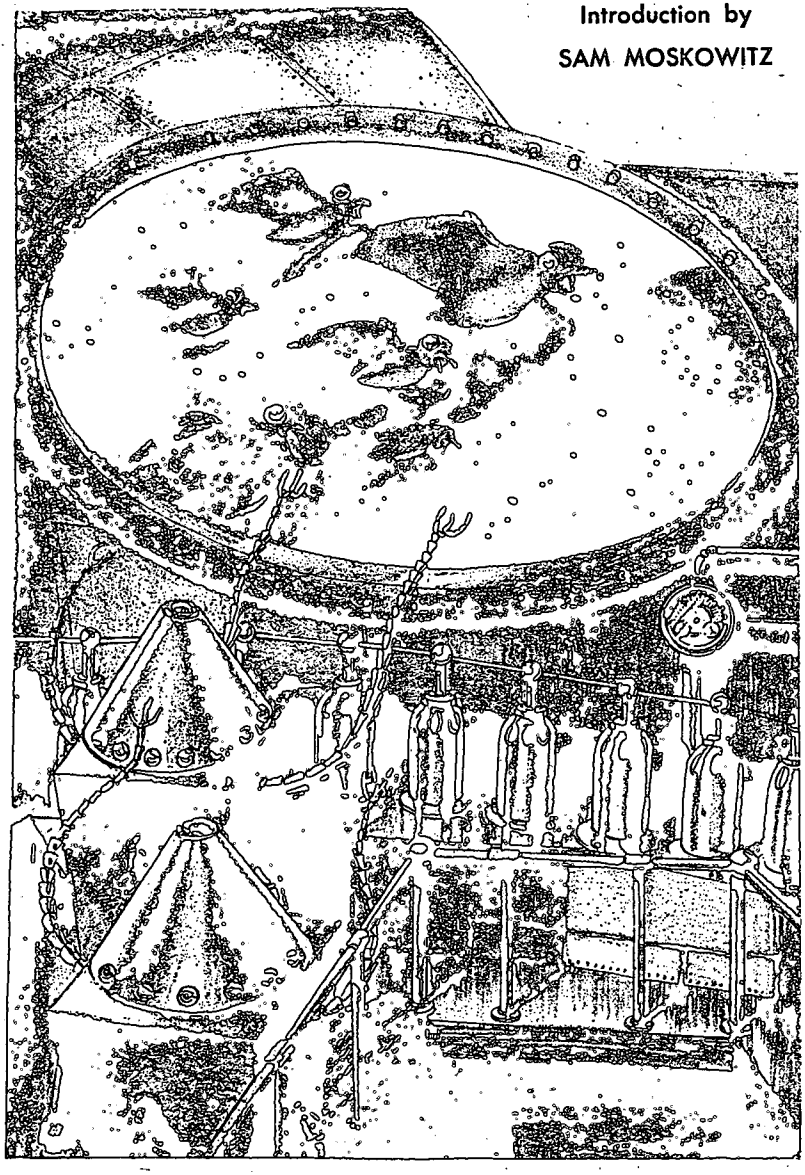
A Classic Reprint from AMAZING STORIES, February 1932

Introduction by
SAM MOSKOWITZ



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the Planet of the DOUBLE SUN

By NEIL R. JONES

THERE is no denying the popularity of the "series" story, particularly when they center about a fascinating pivotal character. No greater testimonials to the acceptance of the "series" story can be offered than the past success of entire magazines built around such talented heroes as Doc Savage, The Shadow, Nick Carter *and* Operator Five.

Science fiction has no dearth of characters that possess this wide appeal. Back in the heydey of the dime novel, Frank Reade, Jr. *and* Jack Wright *invented aircraft, submarines and tanks on a weekly schedule. Second only in popularity to Sherlock Holmes, among A. Conan Doyle's inspired characterizations was* Professor Challenger *who ranged so effectively through the epics of* The Lost World *and* The Poison Belt.

AMAZING STORIES *has been the birth place of a number of popular science fiction characters, including* Buck Rogers, Adam Link, *John W. Campbell's* Arcot, Wade And Morey *and Edward E. Smith's* Seaton, Crane and DuQuesne. *Certainly most favored by the readers was the remarkable* Professor Jameson, *a character who debuted in the July, 1931 issue of* AMAZING STORIES *in* The Jameson Satellite. *That story is notable on two counts; it introduced the Zoromes, a strange race of space adventurers with flesh and blood brains in metal bodies, and it presented one of the early stories of the earth satellite. It did not, however, establish Professor Jameson's popularity, doing little more than set the stage. The second story,* The Planet of the Double Sun, *was the one really responsible for eliciting a strong response of approval.*

Seemingly immortal, his human brain in a metal body, Professor Jameson, once an earth man, would now explore the universe with the Zoromes. And

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what he found was several cuts above the ordinary run of adventure. With all their advanced science and their metal bodies the Zoromes were far from immortal and before they departed from The Planet of the Double Sun, *their existence as a functioning unit would be considerably in question.*

In this story the reader will find elements of the psychology that made Isaac Asimov's masterpiece Nightfall *so effective, though there is no direct link or influence between the two tales. The special success of Neil R. Jones also bears a corollary to Asimov's, since in this instance,* The Planet of the Double Sun *is essentially a murder mystery. The research for the culprits and the perils along the way, provide suspense that augments the various scenes on the strange world.*

The momentum provided by The Planet of the Double Sun *was to a great degree responsible for carrying the Professor Jameson series through 21 published stories which ended just about 20 years after the publication of the first in 1931. This reprinting provides the opportunity for the modern reader to experience some element of the "series" magic, which has infected countless readers of all types for generations.*

The Machine Men of Zor

PROFESSOR JAMESON stood in the fore of the space ship and gazed philosophically into space, ruminating upon the past, present and future, and upon the strange events of his life. How weird and unbelievable it had all been. Yet, here he was, one of the machine men of Zor, a convert of the dying world.

Forty million years had passed into the uttermost realms of eternity since that far gone day on which the professor, in the year 1950, had ordered his dead body enclosed in a rocket and shot into space on the belief that his corpse would withstand the rigors of time eternal. His funeral rocket had become a satellite of the earth, a cosmic coffin, pursuing its lonely way within the silent, restful graveyard of space, the endless vacuum between worlds—a meteor amid cosmic dust.

For more than forty thousand centuries, the body of Professor Jameson, true to his theories and predictions, had remained wholly intact, untouched by the hoary palm of time. The vacuum of space had preserved his dead body, and forty million years later, when the expedition from Zor had found him, he was in the

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same state as upon the day of his death.

Born of the sun's incandescent mass, the earth, with its sister planets, was destined to return to its death within the fiery globe. Following the venture of Professor Jameson, kept secret from the world by his nephew, Douglas Jameson, the world had continued its rapid strides in scientific progress until one day, centuries later, mankind had destroyed itself in a great war. Out of the reigning chaos, the remnants of agonized humanity had degenerated into barbarism and savagery, finally disappearing entirely from the earth.

Then there had come various other cycles of living beings who, in their various forms, ruled the earth for their allotted time and then, like mankind, had faded into dust and obscurity. There had been the ant-cycle, and the bird-cycle, as well as the Terseg invasion from Mars. The latter represented a horde of queer animals with wings, who, being gifted with scientific intelligence, had, through necessity, journeyed across space to the earth, to escape the chill, dying atmosphere of the little red planet.

But to all this history subsequent to his death and journey into space, Professor Jameson had been completely oblivious. With the distant stars as his only companions, he had roamed in the state of death upon his orbit around the huge ball of the rotating earth.

During this entire period the sun slowly lost its heat as did the earth and the other planets of the Solar System. The earth's atmosphere became rarer, and slowly wasted away. Life did not find it easy to flourish as it once had. The rotation of the earth gradually slowed up, and, attracted by the sun's immense gravitation, gradually circled in closer to the solar luminary. The sun's great pull would soon draw its planets back to the flaming folds from which they had been hurled out on their career.

Then came the Zoromes, wanderers of the seas of space, who, in their space craft, passed the vicinity of the dying world. The machine men from Zor had discovered the strange rocket, and they had brought Professor Jameson back to life, removing his brain from the body, stimulating it into activity once again, and placing it in one of the metal machines.

The professor allowed his glance to drop from the darkness of space, studded with its fiery points, to his metal anatomy. A great metal cube upheld by four jointed, metal legs constituted his body, while six metal tentacles curled outward from the

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upper structure of the cube. A cone shaped head of metal surmounted the body, enclosing the brain. A series of eyes encircled the head, and one eye was in the peak, possessing the power of looking straight upward.

He was now a Zorome, one of the deathless individuals of a far-off world of the Universe. Millions of years ago the Zoromes had renounced their flesh and blood bodies and had invented the machines which knew no death but only repair and replacement. Theirs was a life of eternity and continual adventure, and being given the choice of eternity or death, Professor Jameson, after a bit of hesitation and consideration, had thrown his lot with the machine men.

Blue and Orange Suns

GAZING once more into the boundless depths of the cosmic void, the professor, who had been labeled 21MM392 by the Zoromes, contemplated two close-set discs of light which the space ship rapidly approached.

Another machine man walked to the side of the professor and aroused him from his dreamy reveries by a telepathic observation.

"We are nearing one of the double suns."

"How weird and beautiful they are," said the professor, transferring his thoughts to his fellow Zorome. "One of them is a blue sun; the other an orange sun. Are there many of such?"

"Yes," replied 8B-52. "We have also found triple suns, each one of a contrasting color. Of course, even the double suns are not numerous, but among the trillions of suns in space they are not hard to find."

"I recollect," remarked Professor Jameson, "that the astronomers of my day and age viewed a few of them through their telescopes, but they were so far off, and the telescopes were so comparatively inadequate to cope with such inconceivable distances, that little was ever learned of the double stars, though they were known to exist."

"I have seen them before," stated 8B-52. "If you think the double suns beautiful, wait until you see their planets."

"I can imagine," mused the professor.

"You can imagine nothing compared to what you will see," returned the Zorome. "We are heading for the planet nearest the two suns. There are four planets to the system, and they all have their orbits about both suns. Occasionally, in the case of double suns, you will find that some of the planets revolve around each of the suns while

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others of the same system, having their orbits farther from the suns, revolve around both. The suns, as in this case, invariably revolve about a common center between them, passing completely around one another at intervals."

"That would tend to produce eclipses," said the professor.

"It would," agreed the machine man. "There would be no lunar eclipses, however, seeing that the first planet possesses no moons."

"If it did possess moons," ventured Professor Jameson, "what queer, varying effects of moonlight we might witness. There would be a full moon, one side colored blue and the other orange."

"We shall observe such a phenomenon from one of the other planets before we leave this system," stated 8B-52. "The second planet has two moons and the third one has four moons. The fourth and last planet, however, like this one, has not a single moon."

Together they gazed in rapt wonder at the fascinating contrast of blue and orange colors of the great flaming globes.

"Then we shall land on the inner of the four planets?" asked the professor.

"Yes, 21MM392," replied another of the machine men who had just come up and joined the two. He was the leader of the expedition, 25X-987. "It should be a novel experience, your first meeting with the planet of a double sun."

"I have had many a wonderful adventure with you since you took me from my rocket," said Professor Jameson appreciatively. "It is with keen anticipation that I look forward to this exploration before us. As you say, it will be my first sight of a planet having a double sun of bicolors."

More of the Zoromes crowded about the three. The machine men were never tired of hearing the discourses of Professor Jameson. He was educated and had taken quickly to their ways and philosophy. He was an interesting figure among them, and in their emotionless, companionable manner they had grown fond of him. His viewpoint was that of an earth-dweller of some forty million years before, and his ideas, though sometimes appearing grotesque to them, were indeed unique.

And now they discussed the double sun and the retinue of planets as the space ship raced on at a fantastic speed ever nearer the bi-luminary of the starry heavens.

Time meant little or nothing to the Zoromes. They never slept, their bodies required no food or fuel of any kind, and

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there was no night or day in space. They took no trouble to measure time by any manner even though back home on the planet, Zor, the machine men kept a record of time by which they might measure history. The machine bodies of the Zoromes never irked them as flesh and blood anatomies would have done, and time being merely relative, as it truly is, passed swiftly for them. Monotony was an unknown quantity among the ma chine men of Zor.

The twin globes of the two suns gradually grew more flaming and brilliant as the space ship neared the inner of the four planets. The blue sun appeared slightly larger than its orange contemporary. though less brilliant.

A Wondrous World

SLOWLY the space flyer of the Zoromes descended upon the planet of the two suns.

"How beautiful!" expressed Professor Jameson in awe. What unparalleled splendor!"

"It is indeed so," agreed 25X-987.

The sunlight from the two suns, which were situated several million miles away from one another, presented an alluring color effect upon the side of the planet facing them. From one portion of the rotating planet, an observer would have seen the blue sun in the east just above the horizon, while the orange sun was just past its zenith. From another position upon the planet, it would seem that the orange sun was just sinking, while the blue sun rapidly neared its zenith.

It was at this latter point that the space ship came to rest upon the surface of the strange planet bathed in its unworldly glory. Looking down from the cosmic traveler far above the atmosphere, the surface represented a weird blend of blue and orange hues. The view upon the planet was even more vivid and alluring, the two colors blending, clashing and contrasting as the case might be, depending upon the nature of the topography.

The Zoromes left their space flyer and walked out upon this strange planet of kaleidoscopic beauty. In temporary silence they viewed the exotic magnificence of the world they had come to explore—the planet of the double sun.

Never, thought Professor Jameson, had he seen aught to parallel its awesome, unearthly elegance. Truly, the mental vision of heaven by the early saints of Christendom could not have excelled this world of paradise for the optical senses.

A rolling, undulating landscape of hills and valleys

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stretched away in every direction. Beautiful trees grew out of a luxuriant riot of vari-colored vegetation, their tall tops bending over on every side, feathery festoons of misty, trailing creepers adorning their branch ends swaying ever so gently in the breeze. Many shades of moss carpeted the lower extremities of the massive tree trunks, while in the upper foliage of the forest giants, birds of lovely feather and plumage trilled sweetly or else echoed strange calls entirely foreign to the ears of the Zoromes. Lovely shrubbery, interspersed here and there with open spots of violet sward, dotted the landscape as far as the eye might reach. Flowers of gorgeous hues bedecked the sunkissed hillsides, their lovely heads nodding dreamily, as if welcoming these strange creatures to their wondrous world.

From where he stood with his companions upon a comparatively lofty eminence, Professor Jameson gazed out over a silent sea whose waters spread away to meet the far distant horizon. The crystal clear atmosphere of the planet appeared to be of a rarefied nature, or else it supported little dust, for several stars of the first and second magnitudes were clearly visible within the sapphire vault of the sky's illimitable depths. The blue sun, being of a slightly fainter intensity than its lesser companion, now occupied the zenith, being not quite directly overhead, while the orange sun rested upon the watery horizon, preparing to sink out of sight.

THE latter sun threw a rippling path of strange-hued rays across the violet-tinted ocean which lay calmly lapping its flowered shores. It was such a lane down which one might have expected the immortals to have walked. Had the Zoromes been of a nasal sense, intoxicating fragrances of the verdure's surrounding blossoms would have crept up to them from the dense foliage bordering the sea.

The orange sun's burnished disc drew gradually toward the vague line which marked the blending of violet water with sapphire sky. The burning orb slowly sank among a few wisps of multi-colored clouds drifting on the far distant horizon of water like dim, ghost ships. Sinking, sinking, as if reluctantly bidding its blue contemporary farewell, it passed slowly into the translucent depths of the peaceful sea which lapped a distant shore.

And now, except for the orange and golden sunset, a wonderful, blue transformation took place, and many of the blossoms were seen to close their petals. It was a deep, somber blue, and the

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Zoromes felt a strange influence overcome them, as if an intangible presence held their minds in a grip of morbid imaginings. Like an oppressive mantle, it altered the previous cheerfulness of the beautiful world.

Near the shores of the ocean, the Zoromes had noticed thousands of rough, craggy protuberances projecting above the water line, literally thousands of them extending in heterogeneous array for some half mile from shore. Now, as the blue sun reigned supreme in all of its azure majesty, mysterious ripples broke the surface of the silent sea, and strange animals of the water crawled out upon the miniature islands. They were medium-sized creatures, fully half the size of the machine men, and were equipped with eight flipper-like appendages.

Raising their heads to the blue orb in the sky, they voiced in unison a weird, wailing cry, which rang dismally in the ears of the Zoromes.

"This is nearly as oppressive as your dying world, 21MM392," spoke 25X-987, addressing the professor. "What a contrast there is here between the shining of the orange and blue suns and the blue sun alone."

"I should say that it was much more oppressive here at this time than on the dying world which you called Earth," observed 72N-4783, an eminent philosopher of Zor. "I have the feeling that there is an unseen presence about us."

"Perhaps it is the influence of the blue sun and the dismal wailing of those water animals," suggested Professor Jameson.

"No," replied 25X-987. "Such things do not affect us. We are too accustomed to strange scenes for that. We shall journey over the planet and see what we can find."

"In the space ship?" asked 9G-721.

"No. We'll leave the space ship here with half our number. The rest of us will explore, using the mechanical wings."

Exploration

AND so it happened that half of the Zoromes, twenty-five in number, were detailed to stay with the space ship while the remainder, including 25X-987 and Professor Jameson, went upon an extended journey of exploration over that part of the planet in the vicinity of the interstellar flyer.

With the mechanical wings attached to their metal bodies, the Zoromes flew low over the surface of the planet, and were soon far from their companions and the space ship. The wings were capable of propelling the machine men at a fast rate over the sur-

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face of the world, and they traveled steadily with few stops until the setting of the blue sun.

Then there fell an intense darkness, and down from the sky gleamed a multitude of fiery stars. There they stretched across the dark expanse of heavens like the flaring sparks of some mighty, universal conflagration, which, in a literal sense, they truly were. It was equally true that among their flaming sparks there were many dark, cooling embers which had once been brilliant sparks themselves. Of the latter rank was the earth, one of the cold, dead cinders, and soon its cooling sun would also become a burnt-out ember. Such is the law of the Universe.

With the setting of the blue sun, the Zoromes descended for a conference.

"The night will not be long," said 25X-987. "The orange sun will soon rise."

"The planet has three times as much daylight during the present situation of the suns as it has darkness," spoke 8B-52. "The suns revolving about one another give to their planets different phases of daylight as well as the varied periods of daylight and darkness. There is usually more daylight than darkness in the case of these double suns, but occasionally the two periods of daylight and darkness are equal. The period of darkness is never longer than the period of daylight, unless the planet's axis is tipped as was the earth's."

"I do not experience that uneasy feeling since the blue sun went to rest," mentioned 72N-4783.

"Nor I," exclaimed 9G-721.

"It has something to do with that blue sun," said 25X-987.

"When the orange sun is not in sight," added the professor.

"We shall find out the reason before we leave," stated 25X-987.

The Canyon of Death

TRUE to 25X-987's prediction concerning the rising of the orange sun, it was not long in coming. First there was a suggestive lessening of the darkness in the east, followed by a bronze haze which gathered rapidly until in a burst of glory the flaming orb of the great sun broke above the horizon.

Under the dazzling brilliance of the solar orb, the Zoromes took to the air once more, continuing their tour of exploration. They found they were approaching a comparatively barren section of the planet. Deep canyons lay below them, and there grew but little vegetation.

25X-987, followed by his twenty-four companions, soared down out of the sky and into the deepest canyon, the high, rocky walls rising far above the Zoromes as

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they flew lower and lower into the depths. Professor Jameson judged the bottom of the rocky defile to be some two miles below the surface. Farther and farther they sank within the cavernous maw of one of the great scars which extended across the face of the planet.

Finally the bottom was reached, and the machine men of Zor found themselves in a semi-darkness which had not yet been penetrated by the sun's rays. Indeed, the suns would of a necessity be high in the heavens to send their rays down into the long, ragged pit in which the Zoromes now found themselves.

"Look-" exclaimed 9G-721. "It is a pit of death! See the bones!"

Following the wave of 9G-721's tentacle, the rest of the machine men saw that the floor of the canyon was littered with white, gleaming bones. They were strewn about profusely, and in the semi-gloom of the deep canyon shone pale, mysterious and forbidding.

"What could have occurred here?" asked the professor. "Surely, it must have been a wholesale destruction of life."

25X-987 gazed in rumination at the moldering bones. "I wonder," was all he said.

Eagerly, the machine men inspected the bones carefully, attempting a reconstruction in their vivid imaginations concerning the probable appearances of the dead creatures. How might the living possessors of the bones have looked? What sort of animals were they, and why had they died in such wholesale numbers? Ah, it was a mystery, and if there was anything of which the Zoromes were inordinately fond, it was mystery. They searched for evidence of weapons used in the slaughter, but they found none, enhancing the obscurity of the situation.

The machine men spread far out, examining both sides of the canyon, but there were only the white heaps of bones to mock them.

"They were creatures who walked on three legs," informed 8B-52, who had been spending his time with another of the Zoromes examining the bones. "They possessed three upper appendages, but they were not tentacles."

"The upper appendages were more like those of 21MM392 when we found him in the rocket," spoke 5F-388, the other machine man who had been inspecting the bones. "They were jointed."

"Like my arms, you mean," supplemented the professor.

"Yes, that's it," affirmed 5F-388.

"Do you find the bones of any other creature besides those of the Tripeds?" asked 25X-987.

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He received negative replies from the others.

"It would seem then that it was a battle which involved but one species," observed 965A-10.

"Not necessarily," countered 25X-987, enjoying the mystery of the situation. "The victors of the fray could possibly have emerged from the conflict unscathed, or else removed their dead. We do not know as yet whether there was a battle. These creatures might have died of a plague."

"I am certain they were intelligent beings," spoke one of the Zoromes. "We found these articles on some of them."

He extended to 25X-987 several small, metal articles. One of them was a curiously formed ring which had been taken from a digit, or finger, of one of the Tripeds' upper appendages. The Zoromes gathered around their leader to examine the trinkets. They were especially interested in the ring.

"There is some sort of an emblem upon it," spoke the professor.

"Three double suns!" exclaimed 25X-987. "What do you suppose that——"

965A-10 did not finish his telepathic speech which was suddenly interrupted by a message from down the canyon. Incessantly it rang in their minds.

"Come! I've found something!"

CHAPTER II

The Tripeds' Bones

THE Zoromes, as one man, made their way quickly to their companion, who had announced his find, some of them running rapidly on their four legs while others took to the air, their mechanical wings gliding them rapidly through the crystal atmosphere of the planet.

Quickly they swarmed about the machine man who had summoned them. He stood before the canyon wall, pointing upward.

"Hieroglyphics," exclaimed Professor Jameson excitedly.

There, upon the wall, were carved and painted an intricate set of pictures and symbols.

"What does it mean?" asked 9G-721.

"That we must decipher this and perhaps learn of the fate of the Tripeds," replied 25X-987.

"Look " spoke the professor, waving a tentacle at a scrawled figure upon the wall. "There is what the Tripeds looked like! See—the figure has three legs, and there are also three jointed arms!"

"And there above him are the two shining suns," said another of the machine men, pointing out the solar orbs upon the wall or rock.

"He is running," observed 72N-4783.

It was even as 72N-4783 had

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said. The Triped was sketched in the act of running, casting a fearful glance over his shoulder. Nothing pursued him, however, and the Zoromes were at a loss regarding the reason for his flight.

"Here is another picture," stated one of the machine men, "and it seems to bear a connection with the other in some respects."

"Only one sun is shining in this picture," stated 25X-987.

"The blue one," commented the professor.

"And the Triped is falling down dead!" exclaimed 3R-579.

The engraver, who had put the pictures upon the canyon wall, had executed this particular sketch with masterful skill. Still casting a fearful look of terror and anguish over his shoulder, he was in the act of pitching forward dead. Around him lay many other silent companions who had fallen to rise no more.

The Zoromes now contemplated the next picture group. It was a strange one. One of the Tripeds was depicted in the act of leaping off the heights of a rugged cliff. Another, with upraised bludgeon, was about to crash it down upon the skull of a comrade, while others, apparently horror stricken, rushed forward to foil the consummation of the terrible deed. Above this scene the blue sun held sway.

The last group of pictures was the strangest of all. The orange sun shone brilliantly, surrounded by a blue ring. The Tripeds were shown running hither and yon, while above them in the air flew dim, shadowy, menacing forms. The Tripeds were evidently trying to avoid them.

"What does it mean?" queried several of the machine men.

"The two suns are in eclipse for one thing," said 25X-987. "As for those creatures in the air, we have not met them here as yet."

"We have seen but few creatures of any kind, come to consider the matter," observed Professor Jameson. "There were the water animals who voiced their weird cries, and we have seen many birds of varying species, but do you know that in all our traversal of the forests we have seen no animals?"

"That is true," mused 72N-4783.

They now inspected a new row of pictures above the ones at which they had been looking. In one picture the orange sun shone alone. Below it, the Tripeds were engaged in various peaceful duties. In the next picture, both the blue sun and the orange sun shone. The Tripeds were still engaged in the occupations of their everyday life. In the third picture, which was the last of that group, the blue sun shone by it-

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self in the azure sky, and below it not a Triped was in sight. Only one object was visible, and this appeared to be a symbol of some kind. There was a round, white object, under which rested a six pointed cross.

Weird Symbols

IT is the skull of a Triped with three of the upper appendage bones laid across one another below it," explained 8B-52.

"The skull and cross bones," remarked Professor Jameson. "In my day and age upon the earth, such an emblem meant death."

"And that is probably just what this means too," considered 25X-987. "There is something sinister in that blue sun, though I am at a loss to know why it should be so."

"Then our morbid feelings we experienced beneath the sole reign of the blue sun were not our imaginations?" queried the professor.

"Never," replied 25X-987. "It is not like the Zoromes. That blue sun held some terrible menace over the Tripeds."

"Perhaps its rays killed them," ventured 43V-73.

"I doubt it," spoke Professor Jameson. "They appeared well and happy in the sunlight of both the solar orbs."

"But," argued 43V-73, "could not the rays of the orange sun have nullified the death rays of the blue sun?"

"Possibly," was the professor's partial agreement.

"Behold!" cried one of the Zoromes, pointing a long tentacle above them.

The attention of the machine men was focussed directly upward through the single eye in the peak of their heads. Far, far above them on the canyon's western lip there shone a blue haze.

"The rising of the blue sun!" exclaimed 25X-987.

The machine men of Zor followed the canyon's long, winding course. Sometimes it grew narrower and then again it would broaden out once more. Small side canyons now commenced to run into the larger crevice, many of them being far below the level of the main canyon floor, so that the Zoromes often looked into the dark, giddy depths of canyons within a canyon. Several times they found piles of bones of the long dead Tripeds, some of them crumbling to a white powder when touched. Occasionally they came across mysterious writings and illustrations.

One of the pictures appeared to warn all trespassers to avoid searching the canyon any farther. It was an ominous warning to go back. The symbol of the skull and bones lent it emphasis. But still the machine men fol-

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lowed the deep canyon's course, and now it commenced to get darker, and the crevices and chasms in the rocky floor grew more numerous, so that a good share of the time saw the machine men of Zor on the wing.

"The orange sun is setting," said 25X-987. "The blue sun has passed its zenith."

"Have you noticed anything peculiar regarding those suns?" asked the professor as he watched the ebbing glow of burnished bronze upon the high cliffs above them.

"They appear nearer," replied 25X-987.

"But they are not."

"No. It is merely their revolutions about one another."

"The distance between them never varies at any time."

"The orange sun has gone below the horizon," spoke 25X-987. "How beautiful it is when they are both shining, and how depressing and deathly when the blue sun shines alone."

Suicide and Tragedy

THE Zoromes continued on between the towering walls of rock. The blue, gloomy haze which now settled down about them like a dismal shroud of despair seemed scarcely to lessen the Stygian blackness, lending to it only an eerie, sombrous feeling of intense sadness.

"This is what one upon my planet in my day would have called 'giving a person the creeps.'" remarked the professor.

"It is queer," agreed 25X-987. "In all our millions of years of travel we have never before experienced such strange sensations, such indescribable and undesirable feelings. I believe it is what you explained to us as fear, 21MM392, that frame of mind we have never yet known."

"It might be termed that," replied Professor Jameson, analyzing the situation of the machine men. "Never having known fear before, you are not in a position to know whether or not your sensations are born of fear. I have known the sensation of fear many times in my past life upon the earth, and can readily recognize it. Our present sensation is not so much of fear as it is an ominous warning of danger which constantly disturbs our minds. Were it fear, my friends, we should experience the desire to depart from the canyon at once, spread our wings and fly back to the space ship. As it is, we have not the slightest inclination to do so."

The professor's logic was convincing.

Ahead of them there suddenly occurred a commotion. The Zoromes milled excitedly about the edge of a ragged pit.

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"Seize him quick; he knows not what he does!" came the telepathic message ahead of 25X-987 and the professor who, absorbed in their conversation, had lagged in the rear.

"He's gone!"

"We were too late!"

"What's up?" inquired the leader of the expedition, flying quickly over the heads of those before him.

The professor followed swiftly behind him.

"7L-4208 developed a sudden disease of the mind, we believe!" came the reply. "He took off his wings, laid them down upon the edge of yonder crevice, and before anyone could restrain him, had jumped!"

"Head first!" added another of the machine men who had witnessed the mad act.

"Such occurrences are rare and do not happen for ages at a time!" exclaimed 25X-987. "Go down to the bottom of the pit, and see if he can be saved."

Swiftly, several of the machine men flew down into the darkness and out of sight. It was a long while before a reply came up to them.

"He is a mass of wreckage!"

"His brain! His brain!" inquired 25X-987 anxiously.

The leader of the Zorome expedition received an answer in three cryptic words laden with deep portent. "It is destroyed!"

"7L-4208 is dead!" lamented 25X-987 in regret. "21MM392, you have witnessed something which is practically unheard of—the death of a Zorome. Your coming added one to our ranks now our number is the same as before. Evidently something went wrong with 7L-4208's brain, prompting him to do the rash, unreasonable act that he did."

"Either that or else it was the dismal influence of the blue sun," spoke Professor Jameson suggestively.

"Impossible," stated 25X-987. "We are not susceptible to such influences."

DO you remember my sensations just before we left the dying world, and how near I came to doing the very same thing as that which 7L-4208 just did?"

"Certainly," replied 25X-987. "But you must remember that your mind is a great deal different than ours in structure, even if we do enjoy a mutual exchange of ideas. We are immune to any outward attempts to sway our judgment."

"Indeed," agreed the professor, "our minds are much different."

"Silence!"

The caution came suddenly from one of the machine men. Each and every Zorome halted and stood motionless that his

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passage over the canyon floor should emit no noise. The rattling, scuffing and clatter of metal limbs against rock ceased.

"Do you hear it?" asked the machine man strangely.

"Hear what?" asked 25X-987.

"Listen—there it is again!"

Mystic Sounds

AND now to the Zoromes there came a hum, a low, droning buzz as if from far off—yet very near. For a time it hung on a long, monotonous, doleful note, which gradually arose to a faint wail.

"What an awful cry that was!" observed 72N-4783.

"If I possessed bones, it would have chilled them," said Professor Jameson.

"Did you recognize how nearly the last half of that cry resembled the sound emitted by the water animals we saw on the tiny islets of the ocean?" asked 25X-987.

"Yes," replied the professor, "but that cry came from something else—not from the water animals."

"There it is again!"

"I hear several—they mingle together!"

"It is coming nearer!"

"From where?"

"Around the bend ahead of us!"

"No, from behind!"

"Out of the air above us!"

"From the walls of the canyon!"

"It emanates from all around us!" exclaimed the leader of the Zoromes. "How unusually excited my men have become, this is not their usual way! I too feel a tensity—it is strange."

In truth, the Zoromes were not acting like their usual selves. Excitement strode rampant among them. Some of the machine men betrayed a bit of nervous panic which was radically unlike them. Awe had supplanted their customary, stolid indifference.

Above, the blue sun now poured its suffused light straight down into the canyon, its azure orb set like a flaming jewel in the depth of sky. Like a scattering of lesser gems, the fiery stars gleamed in riotous profusion beyond the circle of its aura of closer light.

The low buzzing and hum became more intense, and appeared to rise and fade all about them. Frequently the hum would rise and terminate in a dismal wail. They were the most deathly cries the professor had ever heard, and his companions, the Zoromes, seemed strangely affected.

"Help!"

The cry rang in the minds of the machine men.

"Help!"

With a tremendous leap, one of

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the Zoromes had repeated the act of 7L-4208, jumping into a deep cross canyon, his wings folded uselessly against his metal body. From the doomed man, there came an unintelligible gibberish mixed with wild thought pictures.

"He pushed them off!" elucidated 8B-52 excitedly to his superior who had leaped to the edge of the precipice. "22D-5 shoved 429C-257 and 98S-533 off the edge just before he himself leaped! The cry for aid came from 429C-267!"

"What madness is this?" asked 25X-987 in desperation. "What possesses my men,"

From the dark canyon's depth into which the three Zoromes had pitched to their deaths there issued a whirring noise. Up out of the gloom there hove a dark object which flew aimlessly in and out of the darkness a moment before it came to rest upon the edge of the pit.

"98S-533!" exclaimed several of the machine men simultaneously recognizing their companion.

"I spread my wings just in time to check my swift descent!" stated 98S-533. "Someone pushed me off as I was standing on the ledge looking down!"

"It was 22D-5!" informed 8B-52. "He also pushed 429C-267 just before he leaped himself!"

"This is terrible!" stated 25X-987. "There is a presence within this canyon whose menacing influence is irresistible. We must see if our two comrades are within our power to save, and then we shall quit this gloomy place."

22D-5 and 429C-267 were found to be irreparable. Their metal skulls had been crushed like egg shells.

Like a horde of departing birds, the machine men spread their metal wings and flew far up to where the canyon walls began, evacuating the blue depths of the immense crevice with its insidious humming and unseen, haunting death which played grimly upon the minds of the space wanderers.

"I have never encountered such a horrible place as this before," deplored 25X-987 to the professor, as up through the air they coursed far above the canyon. "We have met and overcome much flesh and blood opposition in our wanderings, and we have successfully repulsed the attacks of scientifically organized beings of other planets without casualty to our ranks. Here is an enemy or invisible entity which wreaks death by suggesing a self-imposed destruction."

"What are you going to do?" asked Professor Jameson.

"Return to the space ship, bring it up here, and with our scientific apparatus discover why our comrades plunged to

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their deaths. We shall then remove the menace, whatever it is."

The Insidious Menace

A CALL came from the rear. "We are short four men!"

"We must go back," stated 25X-987, "and rescue them!"

"27R-410 is beyond rescue!" stated one of the machine men. "When we had arisen half way up through the canyon, he unscrewed his head and threw it back into the depths! His body flew onward aimlessly for a ways before it crashed into a canyon wall and smashed to pieces!"

"We must go back!" repeated 25X-987 resolutely.

"To return is death!" impressed Professor Jameson upon his friend's mind. "We shall return in the space ship if we return at all! It is rash suicide to turn back! You saved me from that once, and now I am determined to save you!"

"You are right, 21MM392," agreed the leader of the space expedition finally. "We must leave this vicinity as soon as possible. Our group now numbers eighteen. We must hurry back to our comrades."

Swiftly they flew back over the barren country of the canyons. Beneath the smoldering glow of the blue sun they saw afar off on the horizon the thin line of vegetation which marked the beginning of the great forests.

"That sound—that terrible humming sound!" warned 25X-987. "I hear it again! We are being pursued! Put on speed!"

"It is no use," declared Professor Jameson. "The terrible sound comes from before us as well as from behind us."

"Let us gain the space ship where we are certain we shall be safe."

"We'll be much safer when that blue sun has set," opined the professor. "You know, I believe that some form of radio activity emanating from that blue sun is responsible for all this."

"Would it create that humming noise as well as bring disorder and death into the minds of my unfortunate men?"

"Perhaps."

"We shall find out."

"Where are the rest?" asked the professor, looking back.

"There is no one behind us."

"We have flown far ahead of them," observed 25X-987, "unless——"

"Unless they have succumbed to the menace," finished Professor Jameson.

25X-987 sent out a call. There came an answer from behind, and as the two machine men wheeled in the sky they perceived upon the horizon three black dots which rapidly overtook them. They proved to be three of the Zoromes.

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"Where are the others?" asked 25X-987. "There should be thirteen more of you."

"They dove to their destruction along the way back!" exclaimed 8B-52. "This is a veritable death hole!"

"Were they attacked?"

"No. Either something happened to their wings or else they left us voluntarily."

"Some of them flew madly into one another, cleaving each other's wings off and thus ending their lives," said 305N-56. "I could declare that some of those accidents were no more than vicious attacks. They were completely demoralized. It occurred just after you and 21MM392 forged ahead of us and out of sight."

"This is the worst yet!" ejaculated 25X-987. "Thirteen of them —I have lost twenty now!"

Struck dumb by this latest tragedy within their ranks, the five remaining Zoromes winged their way rapidly back over the luxuriant forests and dense verdure toward the space ship and their companions they had left with it. And as they sped on over forest, hill, valley and stream, the blue sun set in a murky haze of azure, bringing on the darkness.

The Zoromes immediately felt a peace of mind as the blue orb disappeared below the horizon. The malignant pressure upon their minds abated, and no longer did they sense the sad promptings of the evil influence. The humming in the air had ceased a short while before sundown.

CHAPTER III

Death's Feast

PRESENTLY they neared the space ship, and as they did so the telepathic communications came thick and fast.

"A terrible thing has befallen us while you were gone!" stated a voice from the space ship. "We are nearly wiped out—but two of us remain!"

"What happened?" demanded 25X-987, fearing the worst.

"A strange thing occurred among us! Our comrades went crazy mad, killing each other and themselves!"

"You mean—you mean—during the reign of the blue sun?"

"Yes—that was it!"

"And were there humming noises?"

"Many of them—and the water animals came up and wailed."

"There are but two of you remaining? What happened to the rest?"

"Some of them are at the bottom of the ocean," replied 69B-496. "They flew above the rocky crags and disappeared under the surface when the water animals voiced their weird cries. Then, too, several of them smashed in

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each other's heads in hideous combat. 4C-9721 even spread death among us with the ray gun before we overpowered him. He later answered the lure of the wailing water animals. He is somewhere out there."

69B-496 pointed a tentacle into the darkness toward the silent sea with its rough, jagged islets.

"They were possessed of the devil!" exclaimed Professor Jameson.

"What do you mean?" queried 25X-987.

"Merely an earthly expression which at present comes nearest to solving the situation."

"Where are the rest of your tentacles?" inquired the leader of the Zorome expedition, glancing over 69B-496.

The latter machine man stood before them with but two of his six tentacles remaining. In place of the other four, there projected only ragged, metal stumps.

"The ray gun wielded by 4C-9721, did it," replied 69B-496. "It cut a clean swath clear through 149Z-24, but luckily it didn't hit his head, and he can be repaired."

"Bring me down," issued a new voice, breaking in upon the thought transmissions.

69B-496 reached upon a shelf and brought down the peaked head of a Zorome who opened and shut his metal eyelids a few times.

"Place his head on a new body," ordered 25X-987.

"It was horrible!" exclaimed the head of 149Z-24 suddenly. "I saw them! I came near to going, and I saw them!"

"Saw them? Saw what?" queried 25X-987.

"I didn't get a good look at them, but I saw the things just the same."

"What things?" asked Professor Jameson.

"I don't know," replied 149Z-24. "They were dim and shadowy objects which floated about in the air. I had only a glimpse of them when 4C-9721 shot the ray gun among us. There seemed to be a fascinating, enticing lure they held forth to me. It was irresistible, and I came near to giving in and going when the ray gun cut through me. Then of course I couldn't and after a while the persuasion left me."

"Go where?" asked 25X-987 excitedly, eager to get to the bottom of the mystery. "Explain yourself! What were your feelings, and what made you want to go?"

"I really don't know," answered 149Z-24. "I never felt that way before. There seemed to be no definite incentive, and I do not remember any particular lure. It was a strong persuasion for me to give up thinking—that was all they asked of me—just to give up thinking. That humming

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and wailing was a voice—an audible voice, not a thought voice. Yes, there were the thought voices, too, but they appeared to linger in the background, as if waiting. The wailing and humming voices were the more insistent."

"Hypnotism!" explained Professor Jameson. "Strange creatures are hypnotizing our forces to extinction!"

"Yes, but what are they?" asked 25X-987.

"And where are they?" added 69B-496.

The Mystery Deepens

"25X-987," warned the professor, "we now are but seven where we came fifty-one. I advise that we leave at once to avoid complete extinction."

"But they can't get us inside our space ship, and I am going to return to the canyon of the bones to see if our companions are really beyond recall. I shall also solve the mystery, and wreak out revenge upon whatever creatures that have killed my comrades."

"Your revenge will but lead you on to destruction," stated Professor Jameson.

"But perhaps our companions, who fell back into the canyon, may not be past rescue," entreated 25X-987.

"We should investigate that most assuredly," stated the professor, "but I wouldn't do it while the blue sun shines alone in the sky."

"That is the mystery," mused the leader of the Zorome expedition. "What has the blue sun to do with it?"

"I would forego the satisfaction of knowing," warned the professor. "It would mean stepping into a death trap."

The seven Zoromes prepared for the return trip to the canyon of the dead. The head of 149Z-24 was mounted upon a new body, and new tentacles were placed on 69B-496.

The orange sun had peeped above the eastern horizon, and now the planet of the double sun was once more transformed into a vision of celestial loveliness, a veritable Garden of Eden.

The space ship cruised far above the weird forest with their bright plumed birds and queer lack of animal life. Off toward the barren canyon of death they headed. It was only a short time after the rise of the orange sun that the blue sun hove into view, following closely upon its contemporary.

"See how close together they are," observed Professor Jameson.

"Yes," said 25X-987. "Before the sunset, there should be an eclipse."

"The orange sun is the more brilliant of the two, even though

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it is a bit smaller," spoke the professor. "When the orange sun comes between the blue sun and the planet, there will be a blue ring around the orange sun."

"There is the canyon," said 25X-987, pointing to the barren lands far below where a great ragged rent cut the surface of the strange world, disappearing into the far flung horizon.

Under skillful manipulation, the space flyer was lowered into the ominous depths of the shadowy canyon, the walls rising menacingly as if ready at any moment to close in upon the space ship of the machine men, crushing it beneath millions of tons of rock debris. Or so it seemed to Professor Jameson who felt ill at ease, and was possessed of grim, gloomy forebodings.

Slowly they settled down upon the canyon floor among the white clumps of scattered bones, many of which crunched hollowly beneath the dark hull of the space ship.

"Search up and down the canyon," ordered 25X-987. "See if you can find the remains of the thirteen men we lost in leaving the place."

The search was made, and remains of most of the dead Zoromes were found. Their metal bodies and brain cases were discovered smashed and crushed where in their mad plunges planetward they had come into contact with the rocky terrain.

"We are safe from the devastating death as long as the orange sun accompanies the blue sun in the sky," warned Professor Jameson. "To remain when the blue sun shines alone is rank suicide. Every one of our companions either killed himself or was killed by a comrade. None of them was killed forcibly by anything on this planet, yet some compelling influence drove them to suicide. Now that we know our friends to be unquestionably beyond our aid, I would advise most urgently that we leave at once."

"Not until I know, and have been at grips with, whatever killed so many of our men!" stated 25X-987 firmly.

"To remain is death!" counselled Professor Jameson.

"But we are now prepared, where before we were taken unawares," said the leader of the expedition from Zor. "We shall build up a mental resistance against the menace which seeks to derange our minds."

The Eclipse

BEWARE!" warned the professor. "I can now understand the reason for so many white bones in the canyon! The Tripeds died of the same malady beneath the terrible rays of that

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damnable blue sun as afflicted your men!"

"We shall meet and destroy the menace!" was 25X-987's ultimatum. "Remember that we are Zoromes!"

"And that forty-four of us have fallen prey to the unseen evil within the last rotation of this planet!" reminded the professor. "Confidence has supplanted your caution entirely, 25X-987!"

"The suns! The suns!" exclaimed one of the machine men suddenly. "They are touching!"

"The beginning of the eclipse!"

"The orange sun is crossing before the blue one!"

A small tip of the blue sun had already disappeared before the encroaching, orange orb, and very gradually the great solar spheres moved into conjunction with their first planet.

And then upon the ears of the machine men fell a faint humming noise which increased in volume and intensity.

"The death call!" exclaimed 149Z-24 excitedly. "It is the death call!"

Now, there came several wails, rising to a more piercing pitch than the Zoromes had yet heard them during their brief stay upon the planet.

"Into the space ship!" commanded 25X-987.

Eagerly the machine men obeyed the order. But even within the space ship the dismal howls and terrible humming vibration were heard. Every now and then there occurred a wailing noise which apparently issued from within the space ship itself, drifting suddenly back to the outside once more, as if the author of the hideous sound had passed through the walls of the interstellar craft.

"Look!" cried 69B-496 in alarm. "I see them! I see them plainly!"

"Where?" queried the machine men in unison.

"There!" exclaimed the Zorome, pointing above him with wildly waving tentacles.

"The shadows!" exclaimed 25X-987. "They are the shadows which fly about!"

And now all of the Zoromes perceived them as the two suns merged into an eclipse. Wide, flapping, shadowy forms they were, flying on leathern wings, the air being full of them. Queer, round heads surmounted the bat-like bodies. A pair of bright, gleaming eyes were set in the head, while below them from a wide distended mouth issued the frightful wails and dismal humming.

"You can see right through them!" ejaculated the professor.

"And they are flying through the rock walls!" added 8B-52.

"Here comes one of them for the space ship!" warned 149Z-24.

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Directly toward the space flyer from Zor the ghostly creature flew, and with a piercing wail came right through it as if the ship had not been there. The phantom swooped straight down toward 25X-987 and Professor Jameson where they stood a bit apart from the rest of the Zoromes. It enveloped them and passed, the two machine men being clearly visible to their companions all the time. The wraith continued on and out of the space craft, leaving the two machine men standing together in surprise and consternation.

"The thing passed right through us!" exclaimed 25X-987 in surprise. "It must be an optical illusion!"

"That medley of sound they are making is no illusion," said the professor. "I am not superstitious, but I believe that here is something entirely beyond us. We had best leave while we may."

"Turn the ray guns upon them!" commanded 25X-987, gazing upward through a transparent section of the space ship at the horde of encircling bird creatures.

The machine men obeyed his bidding, and presently several iridescent fingers of light were probing upward to where the ghostly creatures wheeled and circled on the wing. Where the destroying rays touched the canyon walls the rock disappeared, leaving dark holes, but the rays had no effect whatever upon the phantoms who continued their aimless course above the space flyer.

Amid the Phantoms

VOICING their weird, depressing cries, they gazed downward upon the space ship of the Zoromes, regarding it with a solemn mien.

"They resist the ray!" cried 305N-56. "It leaves no impression upon them!"

"Seize 149Z-24!" cried 69B-496. "He has gone mad!"

Several of the machine men seized their companion, who had staggered towards a section of the craft's delicate mechanism with an upraised metal bar, evidently bent on destroying the apparatus.

"Those creatures have his mind in their power!" exclaimed 25X-987. "Quick! We must get out of here! Rise out of the canyon immediately"

Swiftly the space ship arose from the floor of the canyon, leaving the pathetic piles of scattered bones far below. Through the midst of the phantoms they passed, not so much as perturbing them in the least. Back and forth they flew in the space occupied by the interplanetary craft as if it were not there.

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A singular fact which Professor Jameson noticed concerned the queer conditions regarding the passage of the phantoms through an opaque object. Though possessed of the ability to disappear within the solid walls of the canyon, and the power to fly through the space craft at will, Professor Jameson saw that they never flew through one another. Often their wings would strike together in contact, placing either one or else both of the creatures off balance temporarily. How queer, he mused. The phantom creatures who voiced their evil, menacing cries were barely visible, it being possible for the professor to discern the cliff wall through their semi-transparent bodies.

The space ship flew above the ghostly crew, but their weird calls still lingered, and the Zoromes were possessed of the forlorn and dejected spirits which had previously been engendered by the blue moon. At a far height above the canyon the leader of the Zoromes ordered the space craft to be halted. He had no sooner stopped the ship than from below there came the humming sound which the machine men had now come to regard in loathing and disgust.

"They're coming!" admonished 305N-56.

"Wait!" ordered 25X-987. "Don't start away yet!"

From below, two of the dim apparitions flew up around the space craft, flying back and forth through it several times, giving voice to their sepulchral wails, the solemnity of their faces entirely free of changing expression. As they flew about the interplanetary ship, through the machine men, and through any solid object they encountered, the phantom creatures grew dimmer and dimmer, until they were entirely invisible. Only their weird cries were heard, and these grew faint and dwindled away.

"The orange sun is nearly past the blue one," observed 8B-52 after the last faint hum had died out.

"The eclipse is nearly over," spoke 69B-496.

"What manner of creatures could those things have been?" pondered 25X-987.

"I believe that I have the secret at last," said Professor Jameson with gravity. "I have solved the riddle of the blue sun and the deaths of our companions."

"What is it?" asked 25X-987 eagerly. "Speak, 21MM392!"

"With all your super intelligence," stated Professor Jameson, "I don't believe you would have ever solved the problem. During all of your millenaries of exploration among the cosmic realms of space you have never encountered the likes of such cir-

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cumstances as we find on this planet of the double sun. With all your super knowledge, you lack the one item of experience which my earthly life gave to me quite coincidentally, and which now places me in a position to understand the amazing circumstances through which we have gone.

Professor Jameson Explains

WHERE we stand upon this planet there are really two worlds—the world we see about us now and the world of the phantoms. The world of the phantoms, however, is in a different dimension than this one, being upon a different light and color vibratory scale. The creatures we saw are not really phantoms in the literal sense of the word. They merely appear as phantoms to us, just the same as we do to them. They are of concrete proportions in their own plane of existence, even as we are real in our own life.

"When the blue sun shines alone, it exerts a strange color and vibratory effect upon whatever part of this planet it strikes. It produces the strange character of partially bringing together these two worlds, each of a different dimension. The presence of the orange sun neutralizes this effect. The depressing influence of the blue sun which we noticed so quickly is due to the fact that it brings together the sound and thought transferences of these two worlds. The strange quality of the blue rays has not the power to bring the two worlds into bodily contact, however, and that explains the reason for the phantoms flying through the opaque objects of this world.

"When the blue sun is alone in the sky, the voices and thought transferences of the two worlds mingle as one. The strange apparitions from the other world of this planet are responsible for the deaths of our companions as well as for the wiping out of the Tripeds.

"Do you remember the drawings we found on the rock walls in the canyon of death? Everything was depicted as peaceful beneath the reign of the orange sun alone, as well as during the shining of both suns, but under the spell of the blue sun, we saw a great havoc wreaked among the Tripeds. Suicide and murder stalked rampant among them, and death finally took its toll of the entire race just as it destroyed our companions.

"Then we saw the illustrations of an eclipse of the suns, the blue sun being eclipsed by the orange one. Beneath it, we saw the Tripeds pursued by this malignant horde of shadowy appearing birds, phantoms such as we just saw. They are visible to us only during an eclipse. A mysterious

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action of the blue rays around the orange sun during an eclipse brings about a partial visibility of this hidden world, though I truly believe that while the blue sun shines solitary the denizens of the other world can always see us. It stands to reason.

THE CREATURES we saw from the other world are of a warring, destructive nature. By a hypnotic power peculiar to them, they seek to destroy the animals of this world by mentally reaching across the boundaries separating the two planes of existence and wiping them out by overpowering, mental suggestions of murder and self-destruction. This power, as you have already witnessed, is great enough to even counterbalance the super-intellect of a Zorome, though I believe that they themselves are possessed of no great intelligence. Their propensity for hypnotism is not necessarily derived from a magnitude of brain power. I believe it to be a birthright similar to that of the electric eel of my own planet about which I once discoursed to you. Hypnotism and occult power is their birthright even as the power to exude electric shocks is the eel's natural ability."

"Why didn't they kill the birds we saw in the forest, and also the water animals?" asked 25X-987, greatly impressed by the professor's impressive conclusions.

"That I can't say for sure," replied Professor Jameson. "It explains the lack of animal life in the forests. As to the birds, I might venture the suggestion that they are so much like the creatures of the other world that they have sentimentally been spared. Perhaps the water animals' environment renders them impregnable to the suicide inducements of the other world entities. Then again, they may have something in common with them. Their cries were similar, and they emerged from the water only when the blue sun shone alone."

"You are a genius, 21MM392!" exclaimed 25X-987 admiringly.

"Not necessarily," said the professor. "You see, when a young man at college, I was very much enthused at one time in hypnotism, and though unable to exercise it myself, I read a great deal concerning it."

"With all our traveling from planet to planet—from sun to sun—from system to system—we have never before come across what you call 'hypnotism'. I can readily perceive that it is the keynote to this mystery, and were it not for you, the puzzle would forever have remained unsolved."

"And can you now understand why it is imperative that we leave at once?" asked the professor, gazing apprehensively at the

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blue sun. "Even now the orange sun has passed from before the face of the blue one, and is sinking beneath the horizon."

"Now I realize how 149Z-24 saw the shadowy forms when he came near to answering their lure," said 69B-496. "The light from the ray gun combined with the blue sun's rays and the fact that he was under the hypnotic spell gave him the power of vision to see them."

"We must hurry from here," announced 25X-987 gravely. "21MM392 has spoken correctly. It is death to remain!"

CHAPTER IV

The Juggernaut

THE space ship rose upward on a slant, and as it did so, the orange sun, whose great shining sphere had rested half above and half below the horizon, sank out of sight. The blue sun now occupied the sky, and it would not be long before it, too, would follow its orange contemporary to rest.

Almost immediately, with the cessation of the orange sunshine, there arose upon the air the vibrant humming accompanied by its concert of sad wails. The volume of sound swelled up and around the speeding space craft, and the apprehensive Zoromes knew that in, out of and around their ship, the ghostly creatures from the invisible dimension flew, eager to lure them to self-destruction.

"Keep control of your brains!" exclaimed 25X-987 wildly. "Concentrate as you never have concentrated before, or it is certain death!"

One of the horrible wails directly at their ears came to mock the machine man's command. Swiftly the space ship sought to leave the heavy atmosphere.

Somewhere below in the control room there came a rending crash of metal. Professor Jameson and 25X-987, in company with 8B-52 and 69B-496 rushed into the compartment to ascertain the cause of the furore.

"149Z-24 has broken loose!" ejaculated 372V-22.

The machine man who had spoken was firmly holding his mentally deranged companion with a grip of entwined steel tentacles.

"Put him in the buckler!" ordered 25X-987. "We have no time to waste if we are to leave this accursed planet of the double sun!"

But the order was never executed. All at once there occurred throughout the space ship a terrific shock. With a terrible impetus of increased motion, the interplanetary craft multiplied its speed and whirred madly on through the dense atmosphere of the globe. The Zoromes were sent

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tumbling to the floor, their metal bodies and limbs rolling into grotesque heaps at the far ends of the space craft chambers.

Hurriedly they regained their feet.

"The ship will crash!" exclaimed 25X-987 wildly. "149Z-24 has broken the controls of the mechanism which regulates our speed! We are doubling speed every moment!"

"We'll crash or else burn up in the atmosphere like a meteor!" cried 8B-52.

The wind of their passing whistled eerily around the space craft. The shrieking arose to a hissing roar as the space flyer of the Zoromes rapidly gained speed on its mad rush through the sea of crystal ozone.

"Where are we heading?" asked 25X-987, expecting to be smashed into atoms at any moment.

69B-496 glanced at a dial.

"We are pursuing a long arc, in relation to the planet," he said.

"Upward or downward?" asked 25X-987 in mingled hope and dread.

"Downward!" came the hope shattering reply. "The curve of the arc is slightly greater than the curve of the planet's surface so that in view of our present altitude we shall not crash right away."

"But in that time we shall be burnt up with our space ship!" cried 305N-56, his tentacles waving excitedly.

"The friction is becoming terrific!" exclaimed 25X-987.

"There is nothing we can do but wait for a miracle!"

"Or death!" added Professor Jameson.

The hissing roar had climbed the scale of sound vibrations until it was now a terrible whine. The space ship juggernauted on through the planet's atmosphere, carrying the seven machine men to perdition in its inevitable crash which the passing time brought rapidly nearer.

"It is the end!" prophesied 372V-22. "The accursed planet will claim us all!"

25X-987 appeared to have lapsed into a strange stupor, a dazed condition. He said nothing.

"We are halfway there!" came the notification of 69B-496 at the dials.

Super-Hypnotism

A WAVE of suffocating heat swirled through the interplanetary craft. The friction of the terrific speed was beginning to manifest itself. It appeared to be a race between the atmosphere and the lithosphere, to see which would claim the space ship first.

"There is nothing we can do," came the resigned observation

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of Professor Jameson, "but—"

"Leap!" came the startling thought wave from the crazed 149Z-24. "Leap!"

"Leap!" echoed 25X-987, a strange concourse of thoughts mingling with the suggestion of 149Z-24.

"Leap out before we crash!" cried 149Z-24 wildly. "Save yourselves from sure death!"

"Leap out!" mused 69B-496, turning the matter over in his mind.

"Yes!" exclaimed 149Z-24 enthusiastically. "It's the only way!"

"The only way!" repeated 305N-56 mechanically. "Yes, it is the only way!"

"Come, jump out and be free!" urged 149Z-24.

"Stop!" cried Professor Jameson. "Enough! You are yielding to the will of the phantoms of the other world! They are leading you on to suicide!"

The machine men were oblivious to his warning. Evidently they had not heard him.

"Leap!" was 25X-987's only thought. It was rapidly nearing a conviction under the masterful hypnotism of the unseen creatures from another dimension. Already, they had made 149Z-24 their tool and devoted emissary and were largely spreading their insidious influence over the little group of machine men through him.

"The only way!" reechoed 8B-52.

"Cease!" pleaded the professor in a superhuman mental effort. "Do not yield!"

"I'll leap!" was the ultimatum of 305N-56, as if in reply to a request.

He moved slowly toward the door of the space ship. Professor Jameson sprang forward to bar the way. 149Z-24 was before him, however, and came to grips with the professor before he could reach the egress and prevent 305N-56 from leaving the craft.

The machine man appeared to execute the act by no volition of his own, and Professor Jameson knew it to be another prompting of the hypnotic menace.

"Leap!" continued 149Z-24. "The only way!"

305N-56 moved to the space ship door, flinging it open. Had it been in the fore of the craft the onrushing atmosphere would have smashed him backward like a feather to the far end of the room, but the egress was in the rear. Without another thought impression, 305N-56 leaped out into the deep blue sunlight and was gone. Eagerly following suit, 25X-987 and 8B-52 moved toward the opening.

"Don't!" warned the professor in vain, madly attempting to struggle from the tentacled deadlock of 149Z-24. "You are crazy!"

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A sickening feeling obsessed the professor as the two machine men jumped. 149Z-24 now said nothing, and the professor perceived that his mind was in a chaos of terrible resolves. The professor knew that he was viewing the destructive thought impulses of the flying phantoms. He no longer sought to check his companions' mad intentions, knowing full well that it was useless. Helplessly he looked on as 69B-496 and 372V-22 took the fatal leap.

And now 149Z-24 released the professor suddenly and backed away. Was he about to leap too?

Then into the mind of the mentally deranged Zorome, Professor Jameson saw the horrible thought, the terrible command from the other dimension, come slowly stealing.

"Death to 21MM392!"

The professor faltered and backed away from the machine man who stood dazedly before him. The open door clanged dismally while the screaming wind still shrieked gloomily. The depressing sunlight of the blue sun spread a melancholy, azure glow into the interplanetary craft.

With the quickness of a cat, 149Z-24 grasped a heavy metal bar behind him and rushed down upon the unprotected 21MM392 to crush his metal skull.

Professor Jameson, the instincts of self-preservation still dominant in his clear thinking mind, slumped forward as the crazed machine man struck. Two quick actions occurred simultaneously. As the heavy, metal bar missed the ducked head of Professor Jameson and placed a great dent upon his metal cubed body, the latter's tentacles closed quickly about 149Z-24's jointed legs and lifted him off the floor.

Staggering to the opening of the space ship, the professor hurled the metal body of 149Z-24 down upon the great planet which was spinning dizzily past below them.

The Last of the Zoromes

PROFESSOR Jameson made his way to the fore of the craft after having closed the door, and now he gazed out to see what lay ahead of him. The space flyer raced along, apparently on a horizontal position with the planet, its broken, uncontrolled propulsion mechanisms running wild, but the professor knew that the distance between the space ship and the planet was gradually closing.

He was the last of the Zoromes, spared but for a short interval following the fate of his machine comrades. He would soon crash to his death with the space ship.

Contrary to the assertion of 305N-56 that the space flyer

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would double and redouble its speed until the friction of the air burned it up, the interplanetary craft from Zor did nothing of the kind. Though the friction with the atmosphere had produced an unusual warmness within the interior, the speed of the ship had failed to rise above a certain maximum. This was due to the solidity of the air which did not allow the tremendous velocities attained in free space.

Far ahead of him, Professor Jameson perceived a dull, pinkish glow lighting up the distant sky line in the direction the space ship was headed. The blue sun was sinking below the horizon, and the inky blackness of night hovered near as the unpiloted space flyer catapulted onward at such a remarkable speed for terrestrial travel.

The far-off pink glow the professor had discerned upon the horizon in the azure dusk had now mounted to alarming proportions, spreading a red, lurid flare far up into the sky. It was a long way off. Rapidly the space craft ate up the distance, and in the complete darkness which had now fallen, the professor saw the red, angry flare to be a tremendous holocaust leaping skyward from the bowels of the planet.

Great, scarlet tongues of flame licked upward angrily for many miles from the terrible inferno the uncontrolled space ship now recklessly approached. Huge fragments of rock many times the size of the space craft, along with red spurts of fountainous lava, vomited skyward. It was such a volcano as human imagination could never conceive in its actual picture. The vastness of the awesome display and the boundless magnitude of the spectacle lent the impression that a ravaging eternal fire was about to consume the entire world. It was a vision far beyond the conception of Dante, beside which his inferno would have appeared belittled by the contrast.

Into this hell of upcast molten rock and seething flame the space ship of Zor careened in its mad flight. It contained the solitary machine man, 21MM392, known previously to men of the earth as Professor Jameson. As the space ship raced into the first ring of smoke and flame, the professor realized that here was a dramatic climax to his equally dramatic career. He would be burned into gas, and the residue of his body and of the space craft would be converted into lava. The crash of the ship of space would occur in a swirling lake of living fire, or else a hurtling boulder cast out by the tremendous fury of the perpetual flame and seething activity would crush the space ship in flight.

Professor Jameson, the last

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Zorome of the ill-fated expedition, awaited his end with a patience born of martyrdom and philosophy. He had been a martyr to science in his earthly life, and among the Zoromes he had become a confirmed philosopher. Death offered no terrors to him. It was life's greatest adventure, if, however, a bit mysterious and menacing. But what could constitute adventure without mystery or menace of some description?

Through the Inferno

THE hell of the raging conflagration enveloped him, and produced a roaring as if all the elements of the Universe unloosed at once. Red, raging flame licked hungrily about the speeding space ship, and swirling smoke spread its murky haze around the ill destined craft. Glowing rock debris and spattering, liquid fire showered the metal sides, while by a miracle the huge boulders missed the ship in its mad flight through the raging hell.

A dizziness and weakness assailed the mind of Professor Jameson within its metal skull. The terrific heat, which would have shrivelled the body of a flesh and blood creature, killing it instantly, was now beginning to affect the metal machine man's brain a bit. The space ship was intensely heated, parts of its metal shell glowing red. The skull of Professor Jameson was growing hot, and with a sudden lurch of dizzy senses, his consciousness departed and he knew no more. The professor's last sensation was that of being whirled rapidly over and over as the space flyer glanced from the side of a huge, smoldering, upflung rock and gyrated dizzily down into the lake of fire.

Why was it that Professor Jameson had eluded the sinister fate of his fellow Zoromes to succumb to the living fires? Why had his mind escaped the irresistible lure of the phantoms from the other world? The sagacity, wisdom and power of intellect of the Zoromes had outweighed his own in most respects—yet they had fallen before the hypnotic spell to which he had remained immune.

The truth of the enigma lay in the fact that Professor Jameson's mind, as 25X-987 had once remarked, was a great deal different from the gray matter of the machine men of Zor. In justice to the Zoromes, those wanderers of Cosmic space who had stored up the knowledge of millions of years, let it be said that the hypnotic influence of the winged phantoms depended not upon the power of intellect. Their weird power of mind

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across the barrier of an invisible dimension exerted its influence through the susceptibility of the mind's structure.

Professor Jameson's brain structure was radically different from that of the Zoromes and the Tripeds, and as there was no harmonizing of his mind matter with that of the winged phantoms on the other plane of existence, the professor had been immune to the fatal lure.

The professor attempted to compose his thoughts. His mind rolled sluggishly in a riot of confused mental pictures. He appeared to be drifting in an immense, unending blackness of eternal mystery. He groped—he sought about him, and found he had nothing to reach with, nothing with which to apply the sensation of touch. He scarcely knew whether or not he existed, and imagined himself merely a shadow among shadows, a bare hint of existence. Where was he—what had become of him? He wondered vaguely, but there was no manner in which to satiate his inquisitiveness. All was mystery.

For a long time he felt the presence of objects near him he could not touch, and then out of the depth of blackness before him there shone a dull, gray light. It grew slowly to gradually fill up his vision. The light whirled like a mammoth pinwheel and then slowed up, resolving itself into three spots of varicolored light surrounded by finer points of scattered brilliance. His blurred vision was clear once more, and he seemed a bit more conscious of himself. Something long and circular lay before him. Involuntarily he moved a bit, and the thing moved. It was a tentacle—his tentacle. Then he was not removed from the body—not dead even. But where was he?

His senses and thinking power now emerged from its state of temporary incapacity to function properly. He looked upon the other side of him, lifting the eyelid shutters of the eyes on that side of his head.

He saw the interior of the space ship. Once more he looked out through the transparent side of the interplanetary craft at the three comparatively large splotches of light he had previously seen so indistinctly. They were grouped close together.

Two of them were bright disc-like objects which shone against a velvety blackness while the third object appeared as a semi-disc which glowed less brilliantly. Professor Jameson gave a gasp of incredulity. He was once more out in space far from the planet of the double sun which was represented by the half circle of light. The two round objects were the double sun, one orb blue and the other orange.

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How had he escaped the volcano's fiery depth into which the uncontrolled space ship had madly rushed in its wild, unrestrained flight? The last thing he had remembered before his heat disordered brain had given way to unconsciousness, was the terrific, glancing impact with the red hot boulder cast from the blazing inferno's chaotic activity. A great indentation upon the side of the interstellar traveler mutely testified to the collision with the volcanic rock. And then, the professor remembered that through the window of the spinning space ship he had obtained a few fleeting glimpses of the white hot lake of fire rushing up at him with incredible velocity.

Eternal Loneliness

WHAT had happened? Had this final sight been the delusion of an overheated brain? Evidently the glancing blow dealt by the huge chunk of volcanic debris had driven the interplanetary ship back into space where its uncontrolled speed had rapidly taken it from the vicinity of the planet. A plausible solution suddenly occurred to the professor. Possibly the lake of fire he had seen approaching, following the collision with the hurtling boulder, was but the reflected mirage of the lake's fiery surface upon the bank of lurid smoke clouds hovering far above the blazing holocaust. Suffice it to say, however, that he had been miraculously delivered from the hellish fate to which he had considered himself inevitably consigned.

He arose, and made his way to the control room where he glanced at the partially wrecked machinery. He found the dials and consulted them, finding that the space ship pursued a course around the double suns. The space ship had become a satellite of the blue and orange suns even as the four planets which encircled the suns. Professor Jameson found that the orbit of the disabled space craft was midway between the first and second planets. The space ship had long since ceased its own mad speed, making the professor wonder how long he had remained unconscious. For an earthly day? Had it been a month, a year, or —or an age? It made little difference, for there in space, time was an unknown quantity, and when one is devoid of senses, time ceases to exist. The professor had no knowledge of how long he had remained unconscious and could calculate no approximate guess.

The space ship's machinery was irreparably wrecked, and Professor Jameson was doomed to a solitary, lonely life of per-

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petual existence in his annual course around the double suns, enabled to watch at all times the various phases of the planet on which had occurred the death of his fellow comrades. He was the last of the Zoromes, and the only escape from the monotony of the existence which lay before him was by suicide. The professor contemptuously shunned this expedient of release.

For over forty million years he had lain preserved in death within his rocket container, to be found and brought back to life by the Zoromes. And now he was consigned by the irony of fate to a similar existence, except that, this time, he was not bereft of life and the sensation of living. His was to be a perpetual life of loneliness, in trivial comparison with the life of a flesh and blood creature of any planet.

The stars and passing comets would be his only companions, silent ones of the cosmic Universe, and perhaps occasionally a passing meteor would flit its temporary greeting before continuing its aimless pilgrimage on into the realms of eternal mystery.

Would a space ship from Zor ever chance that way some time in the eonistic future to release him from his cosmic prison? There were many of the machine men expeditions scattered throughout space, but his disabled space craft represented the proverbial needle of the haystack, and the haystack but a solitary haystack among billions. It was a forlorn hope, with chances of a trillion to one. Better were the chances of a space expedition from one of the four planets of the double sun finding the wrecked space traveler.

Perhaps in the ensuing ages measured only in geological history, the simple forms of life upon these planets would rise through various progressive scales of evolution to an inevitable position of scientific prominence, where the art of space flying would be conquered. Then would the professor's eons of loneliness be abruptly ended, plunging him into a series of new and startling adventures.

Such a hope must lie far within the interminable future, and the fruits of such a hope were to be born only of an undying patience and a wonderful philosophy. Moodily, and in deep, meditative rumination, Professor Jameson, lost in the twisting labyrinth of his own thoughts, stared across the depths of vacuum to where spun lazily in space the planet of the double sun.

THE END

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A Classic Reprint from AMAZING STORIES, February, 1938

SPAWN of the RAY

By MAURICE DUCLOS

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

ONE of the most common plot devices in the science fiction pantheon is that of the rapidly reproducing menace which gets out of control and either threatens to, or does succeed in, extinguishing all other forms of life.

As early as its third issue, June, 1926, AMAZING STORIES *featured just such a story,* The Malignant Entity *by Otis Adelbert Kline, in which a ravenous nucleus of laboratory-created protoplasm escapes, potentially threatening to digest all living things on the earth. The following month, July, 1926,* AMAZING STORIES *featured on the cover* The Eggs From Lake Tanganyika *by Curt Siodmak, in which giant insects get out of control offering obvious danger.*

While in most cases the menace was a hungry organic creature, fundamentally an animal, plant or insect, the imagination of science fiction authors expanded beyond these limitations. A. Merritt in The Metal Monster *projected a rapidly reproducing metallic life form expanding out of an Asian valley which threatened the world with doom, while John Taine in* AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY *for Winter, 1930 utilized a rapidly reproducing life-form with a* crystalline *base originating in China.*

Not satisfied with merely exterminating life on earth, the insatiable appetite of Donald Wandrei in his short story On the Threshold of Eternity *which appeared in his collection* The Eye and The Finger *has the* entire universe *consumed by a living Cosmic Dust!*

Nor has the sophistication of modern science fiction and modern writing techniques remained immune to this plot line. Greener Than You Think *by Ward Moore published in hardcovers by Soane in 1947 deals with the development of super grass that spreads across the earth, crowding out other forms of life. With*

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open admiration, John Christopher, a British author, grasped Moore's menace to his breast, twisting it so that a disease destroys all grass, thereby endangering all life on the earth in his novel No Blade of Grass. *The potency of the theme was such that the story was serialized in* THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, *became a pretty good seller in hard covers and was purchased for a moving picture at $80,000.*

The Spawn of the Ray *by Maurice Duclos utilizes that very same, time-worn, hoary old plot about a menace getting out of control and threatening all life on the earth. However, what happens to this menace is truly an ingenious twist on an old saw and considering the nature of man more probable than the conclusions of most other authors who have employed the same theme.*

WHEN Benny Parker lurched into the Science Club lounge, coughing and talking to no one in particular, the members gaped in unbelieving amazement. For "Bunny," as everyone called him, was even more timid than his nickname implied—and that he should be slightly intoxicated was incredible beyond words. Two smirking individuals entered close behind him. Not fifteen minutes before, they had forcibly dragged Benny into a beer parlor for a drink. But the "beer" they fed him was in reality a potent ale. He had not known the difference until the world began to sway before his eyes and a vast, incredible courage suffused his being. Then he didn't care. At the present moment the two practical jokers were secretly convulsed with laughter as Benny treaded his way about the room, shaking hands and talking loudly to startled Club members.

As its name signifies, the Science Club was nothing more than a group of persons who had been brought together by their common interest in things of a scientific nature. A laboratory and complete research library were maintained at their clubhouse, which otherwise would have been far too expensive for one individual. It was open at most hours of the day or night, and was frequented by its members when chance permitted. Regular monthly meetings were also held, and nothing less than a major catastrophe could stop the enthusiasts from attending. The present gathering was such a one, but of special interest was their guest of honor, the great Sir Hamilton Hodge. He had graciously consented to say a few words on evolution, a subject

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that had brought him world renown.

As is befitting so distinguished a personage, Sir Hodge was late. He arrived half an hour after the appointed time, effectively making the group realize his importance. There followed an introduction by the Club president, characterized by all the ceremony of a launching of some giant of the sea, while the members looked on with awe—except Benny Parker, who was in condition to greet him with shouts and much clapping.

For another half hour the famed scientist lectured on evolution, while his entranced listeners drank in every word. He concluded impressively, as though he might have said the same thing many times before: "And so, my friends, we find that mutation in all manner of life is caused by several things. First; survival of the fittest. Second; by inheritance of favorable characteristics. Third. . . ."

AT this moment Benny's voice rose from the back of the room. "Hey, Prof! Don't forget rays—they cause evolution, you know."

The great man allowed his eyes to rest upon the small individual who was swaying on his feet like a tree in a storm. A slight frown of annoyance crossed his brow. "Rays cause evolution?"

"Sure," said Benny. "Cosmic rays, or some invisible radiation from the sun, make things evolve!"

Sir Hodge concealed his irritation. He forced his voice to boom out in hearty laughter. The others in the room were quick to follow suit—though each wondered vaguely what the joke might be. "You have been misinformed, my good man. Rays have nothing to do with evolution. I have just explained why organisms evolve."

But Benny was persistent. "I heard of an experiment where flies were caused to change form in several generations by subjecting them to cathode rays! Isn't that evolution?"

Sir Hodge was angered. Heretofore his theories had been accepted as fact. Now a small town amateur scientist was doubting his word. "I see you don't realize who I am!" he said haughtily.

"Oh, yes I do," replied Benny. "You are Sir Hamilton Hodge, the greatest authority on evolution since Darwin's time. Someone has said you're even greater than Darwin—in fact—I believe you said that yourself!"

For a long moment breathless surprise filled the room. Then a snicker sounded amongst the gathering. Sir Hodge's cheeks slowly turned red. "Never"—he spluttered—"never have I been so insulted!" He turned abruptly and marched from the room.

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AFTER that fatal evening Benny Parker rarely dared venture to the Science Club. Whether early in the morning or late at night, there was sure to be someone puttering about in the laboratory or library who would immediately start to joke about "rays" and "evolution." Once he had raised sufficient courage to say that at least cathode rays caused evolution. But only roars of laughter greeted him.

Finally he decided that something should be done about the matter. He would prove his point! If scientists could cause organisms to change, he could do it too! Then all this laughing and joking would have to stop. Immediately he sent a special delivery letter to a large scientific apparatus company in Los Angeles.

One evening when he returned from work he found a package on his door step. It contained the vacuum tube and transformer he had ordered. They were not large, as the standards of such equipment, but nevertheless had neatly deflated his bank account. The vacuum tube had been made to his own design, so he told himself that the exorbitant price was justified. Its special feature was an aluminum "window" that allowed the rays to escape beyond the glass walls. This "window" was strong enough to resist the vacuum, yet numberless minute spots upon it were only .002 of an inch in diameter, through which the rays passed without hindrance.

Like an eager child Benny hurriedly brought the apparatus into the front room and there connected it for use. Then he began to speculate on what manner of creature would be best to experiment with.

Of all the vast subject of biology there were few things that interested Benny Parker more than FLAGEL-LATA, a microscopic cell that forms green scum in stagnant ponds. It can be classified as neither plant nor animal, for it has characteristics of both. Like a plant it contains chlorophyll, which enables it to manufacture its own food by photosynthesis. Animal-like, it has delicate appendages whose incessant whipping of the water carry it rapidly along. Or, animal-fashion, it may absorb organic food substances through its cell body.

Having some of this green scum in the kitchen where he had been observing it with a microscope, Benny decided that it would be his first subject. He placed a small quantity beneath the "window" of his tube.

BUT sometime during the following hour the flagellate cells failed to survive. Under the microscope he saw that the now

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motionless organisms had grown enormously. But at the same time their appearance was one of dryness—despite the fact that they were still in the water. Their green had faded to a pale transparent hue.

He was in high spirits. The cells had perished, of course, but what did that matter if at the same time they had enlarged? It was quite obvious that the trouble was over-exposure to the rays.

THE next batch was left beneath the tube only a few minutes. After an hour interval the process was repeated. Through the lens it was plain to see that they had grown larger than ordinary flagellates. Benny was elated beyond words. He did not know what the outcome of this experiment would be, but he could well imagine the surprise and praise with which the Club would greet him if something noteworthy resulted.

In order that the process might receive no interruption, he attached an automatic, timing device so that the tube would function during the night and while he was at work. The tiny organisms continued to grow!

At this time individual flagellate cells had reached the size of a quarter inch in diameter. It had become necessary to leave only about a score of them in the wide-mouthed jar. Benny found them consuming more and more food as they grew. He also discovered that the length of time-exposure to the rays was proportionate to their size—the duration increasing with growth.

Even with the unaided eye, infinitely fine thread-like tentacles were visible radiating from the green bodies. But through the microscope the body was transformed into a vast bag of numberless translucent cells. The tiny tentacles were large ropes that propelled it smoothly through the water. Wonder of wonders! Not only had they increased vastly in size, but they had also evolved! It was this evolution—the massing of cells together—that had actually made them grow. From simple organisms he had created complex, specialized creatures!

WHEN they were an inch in diameter Benny decided to take them to the Science Club. He smiled as he thought of the amazement they would cause. Then he could laugh at the whole Club—make them eat their words! He put the things into a large fruit jar and started to leave. But then he began to grow doubtful. What if the Club members didn't believe him? They might think he had caught a few jellyfish or obscure sea organisms. No, that would never do.

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He must continue the experiment until he had produced something the likes of which had never before been seen. He replaced the things in their container, inwardly cursing himself for lacking nerve.

SO far during the experiment none of the flagellates had multiplied. He removed one to let it live its natural life. It continued to grow till about once again its former size. He waited impatiently to see what would happen. Then one morning he found that it had divided into two living, moving entities. He was somewhat disappointed, for innumerable minute organisms reproduce in exactly the same manner. He destroyed it.

As the space in the jar beneath the vacuum tube became crowded by the flagellates growth, he removed them one by one. Finally only a single survivor of the original flagellates was left. When it had grown to a foot and a half in diameter it was a yellow-green thing with strange little leaf-like projections at one end. Only a few tentacles remained, these being arranged in a horizontal plane around its body. Stranger still, it was showing a tendency to leave the water!

Once, when he returned from work, it was actually out of its jar, and lying on the dining-room table where he kept the tube and equipment. A sudden fear assailed him that it might be dead. But as he reached to pick it up it made an abrupt move as if to avoid him. When he put it back into the water it clung stubbornly to his hand.

"Well! I see where we'll have to make something to put you in!" Benny informed the creature. "Might fall off the table and hurt yourself!"

Thereafter he kept it in a cage covered with window screen. The thing had undergone an amazing metamorphose. It had acquired a fan-like tail of green appendage that looked for all the world like ordinary leaves. Its body was the shape and color of a pine-cone, but of a size slightly over two feet in length. At the smaller end was an organ of three pedal-like membranes which were capable of being opened or closed. Benny knew it was a mouth, for lately the creature had consumed more and more particles of food through this aperture than it had by absorbing them with its body cells, as it had done since its original microscopic size.

AS an experiment he threw a fly into the water in which the thing was half submerged. Immediately the flower-like mouth opened and the insect disappeared within.

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"So! You're demonstrating another animal characteristic!" cried Benny in delight. Then a fantastic idea came to him The monstrosity was as much plant as animal—what then, would be its reaction if some earth were placed near it?

He dared not put the dirt into the water with the thing for fear it might be harmful. Therefore he scattered some on the cage floor near the base of the crock. Almost immediately it came out, moving easily on its six tentacles and looking at first glance like a monstrous spider.

Breathlessly Benny watched it. He had not definitely determined whether it possessed sight or not, but there were several round areas above its mouth that were composed of a red pigment which, he reasoned, might be sensitive to light. It walked surely to the earth. Then Benny was treated to an astonishing sight —a creature eating common soil —and consuming it as if starved!

"Gosh . . . that's incredible!" gasped Benny, trembling with excitement. Still, what was so incredible about it? The thing was part plant, and like a plant it must get certain elements from the earth for body-building.

After that it never went into the water again. It seemed to derive all necessary moisture and minerals from the earth that Benny fed it each day. Also included in its diet were great numbers of flies, grasshoppers, and even chunks of raw meat, which it seemed to devour with great relish. One peculiarity that Benny noticed with interest was its habit of coughing up the undigestible remains of food it had eaten. This seemed its natural means of elimination, for both earth and meat alike were coughed up after as much nourishment as possible had been taken from them.

Its fare of soil seemed suited to it, for it grew by leaps and bounds. Benny imagined he could almost see it enlarge. Four feet high it stood on its great three-inch thick tentacles. Its large fan-tail of giant leaf-like projections actually touched the top of the cage.

He had long since ceased treating it with the rays. For one thing they could no longer reach all parts of its body simultaneously. Then too, he did not want the flagellate to get larger. As it was it consumed more and more meat, even though that was the smallest part of its diet.

Arising one morning, Benny was surprised to see that his creature had shed its scale-like body covering. This made it look slightly thinner and he could not resist comparing it with a plucked chicken. However, he did not understand why this had

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taken place. The brown scales were strewn carelessly over the damp earth on the cage floor. He examined one. It was about an inch in diameter, roughly circular in form, and quite flat. There were symmetrical shapes on it like infinitely fine carvings. He could make out six tentacles folded flat against a body, a tiny perfectly formed fan-tail on the other side . . . in a flash he understood. The thing was a sort of seed, a miniature of its parent! All that was needed to bring it from its quiescent state was water!

Many a time he had taken a bean seed or ordinary peanut apart to examine the plumule—that little fish-shaped growth between the two halfs. Well-defined stem and leaves, folded together in a dry little bundle form the plumule. Though inactive, hard, and apparently dead, he knew that the protoplasm of such a seed only awaits favorable conditions for growth to begin. And obviously it was in such a manner that the creature he had treated reproduced itself. He estimated that altogether there were about a thousand of the seed-creatures—literally blanketing the wet earth.

NEXT day the miniature flagellates were beginning to show signs of awaking life. Their leaf-tails, folded over their bodies, were turning green and beginning to open out like the leaves of an emerging bean plant. Benny sprinkled water over them to hasten this process. Two days later the little creatures were crawling over each other like a swarm of spiders in search of food. Moisture taken from contact with the dirt had rounded out their bodies and unfolded their legs, bringing complete life and motion. Exact replicas of their parent they were, only vastly smaller. At first their movements were slow and feeble as an insect fresh from its chrysalis. But after an initial meal of sand their increase in strength left Benny fairly gasping. However, the green of their tails was a sickly hue—pale like a plant deprived of sunlight. He knew that they must be put into the open. Sunlight is indispensable for the manufacture of starch in plant life.

Early one April morning he decided to let the little creatures bask in the warm sunshine. As he had not yet changed their quarters, he took cage and all and placed it on the back porch where the rays of sunlight fell squarely upon it.

For a moment he lingered to enjoy the beautiful morning. Spring was in the air and vegetation was at the height of its luxuriant growth. Insects droned and buzzed in the under-

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brush or scuttled over the warm surface of the driveway. The flagellates seemed to be affected also, for their movements quickened and their leaf-tails slowly opened to receive the fullest amount of sunlight.

Reluctantly Benny entered the house. He'd have to shave quickly this morning or be late to work again. As he lathered his face his movements became almost automatic. His mind was industriously forming pictures of a world left gasping by the miracle of his creation. Of course the idea of evolving different species by rays was not exactly new. One eastern university had created a new plant by the application of X-rays to an ordinary garden growth. But the experiment seemed not to have been carried so far or in just the same manner; nor had ever such results been obtained! An organism that was both animal and plant! The scientific world would be overcome with amazement. Then he would receive offers to join great laboratories and universities at fabulous pay! Riches! Fame!

BENNY was interrupted in the midst of his pleasant vision by the neighbor's dog, which was barking under the very window near which he stood.

"Confound it!" he muttered. "Why can't people keep their yapping mutts home?" And then, because he was a timid soul, he wished somebody would ask them to keep it quiet.

Abruptly there was a resounding crash in the backyard. The barking rose to a furious pitch. Benny stood as if frozen, with razor held in mid-air. It had been a sound like something tumbling downstairs—all the color vanished from his face. The cage of flagellates! He had forgotten about them! No wonder the dog was barking!

But when he reached the back porch it was too late. The cage was at the bottom of the steps, its door open. The source of all the trouble, a large mongrel dog, was playfully snapping and yelping at the little flagellates as they emerged. Like a swarm of tarantulas they sped over the back lawn and into the surrounding shrubs and undergrowth. Not a one remained except the original specimen. It had grown far too large to escape through the little door.

Benny was in a panic. If he failed to catch everyone of them there was no telling what might happen. When full grown they were very powerful, and with their six legs should be able to travel faster than a race horse. As meat eaters they might attack little children—even grown-ups!

Benny ran his fingers through

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his hair, struck by another terrible thought. In two months the things would be full grown and produce a thousand offspring apiece.

'There'll be a total of a million the second month—in four months a thousand million . . .' He could go no farther. For the first time the seriousness of the situation became apparent. In a short while the things would overrun the earth. It was simply a matter of mathematical progression with staggering figures —thousands, millions, billions— and the very earth under their feet as food! Of course many of the flagellates would meet death, but to counteract this was the fact that each would multiply many times in its life span. Benny's fertile imagination pictured a world besieged with the things, death and destruction everywhere.

Forgetting time, work, everything except that he must catch the things, he began to tear up flowers and shrubs like a madman. Indeed, with the shaving cream still on his face, one could well imagine he was foaming at the mouth. Fortunately, none but his neighbor was witness to his actions. When she saw him smeared with soap, and down on his hands and knees in the weeds hitting around wildly with a board, she thought nothing of it. He was more than a little eccentric in her opinion—today's actions only proved it.

By noon Benny gave up in despair. He had caught only fifty-seven of them, and these by smashing with a club as they darted out of the weeds when moved about. The rest might be blocks away for all he knew. They could dash over the ground with amazing rapidity.

For the rest of the day he was too sick with despair to go to work. He could only curse his misfortune and think of how many future tragedies might be directly traceable to his carelessness. In a sudden fit of rage he dashed the expensive vacuum tube to the floor; then immediately regretted his actions.

PAINFULLY a month and a half dragged by. Benny was thin from worry and lack of sleep. The flagellates would be nearly full grown now. His tension increased each day as he scanned the papers for news of the things. Probably they would be brought to public attention by some horrible killing.

He still had the first flagellate —and in such a massive cage that he could barely move it. He did not know what to do with the creature; its purpose was gone now. He dared not show it to anyone or tell of his experiment. To make matters worse, brown scale-seeds were growing on its

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body again. It would soon multiply!

But before the recent catastrophe could repeat itself Benny determined to do away with the thing—destroy it! Besides, its appetite for large quantities of meat was expensive to satisfy. So that very evening he unpacked his large caliber pistol, and after working up sufficient courage, shot the flagellate. But to his dismay the thing didn't die—in fact it didn't even seem to know that there was a neat hole entirely through its body. A little green liquid oozed from the wound but that was all. He tried another shot—with like results. Then another and another. One leg was completely blown off but still it showed no signs of death. In desperation he took a large butcher knife and literally hacked the strange creature to bits. He might have been cutting butter, for its body was nothing but plant-like cells and there were no bones in it at all. Then, and only then, was it really dead. Benny slept little that night.

Next day his fears were realized. A small news item in the morning paper, written in a jocular manner, caused his anxiety. A ferocious six-legged creature had been seen in the northern section of Los Angeles by several school children. It was said to be about five feet tall, with a leg span greater than that of a large octopus. The frightened tots had all escaped safely.

"Gosh!" groaned Benny. "Clear up in L.A.! That's a long way from here. The things must be distributed over an area of thousands of square miles already!"

The following morning's paper brought even worse news. Several of the things had been seen near densely populated districts by grown-ups. This time the article was written in a more serious vein.

Two days later the flagellates were creating front page news. They had been seen on dozens of occasions, both near and afar, and their very appearance terrorized whole towns. Several times traffic on the main highways had been disrupted at sight of them; deaths resulted in the ensuing wrecks. Although no actual attack had been reported, police were ordered to patrol all roads and to shoot the things on sight.

Scientific interest was also being aroused. The Smithsonian Institution, National Geographic Society, and a northern college, were sending some of the country's most eminent biologists to capture and study one of the "freaks of nature."

BENNY quit his job. The swiftly increasing number of flagellates seen, and the State-

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wide alarm caused, was too much for him. He wouldn't be around when the things got beyond control. They multiplied so fast, and because bullets would hardly affect them, an army would be next to useless as means of protection. His fertile imagination was assisted by numerous stories he had read about man-made entities overrunning the earth. As for warning people—that would be quite useless—at least it had been in stories.

It took little time to load his car with provisions and a few necessities, and to leave his house just as it stood took even less. The rent would be due in a few days so he didn't care. He flashed past the Club without giving it a glance and was soon on the open highway.

THEN a vast curiosity began to assail him. It wouldn't take much longer, he told himself, to drive through Los Angeles on the way to his hide-out. Then perhaps he could see for himself how the terrorized section was faring, or whether the papers had exaggerated things. He wouldn't admit to himself that he wanted a last look at a flagellate before he went to the mountains—but that was why he took the longer route. The distance to the big city was really many miles out of his way, but once his mind was made up it worked with a singleness of purpose that was amazing for one so timid.

He avoided the downtown section as much as possible, for it was obvious that no flagellate would be found there. The hilly northern residential district was where he turned. His way led through Elysian Park and the famed Figueroa St. tunnel—a tube in three sections running under a series of ridges in the park at a distance of several hundred feet apart.

AS he drove through the first tunnel, a motorcycle policeman drew up beside him. For a moment he thought he had violated some traffic rule, but the officer's first words were reassuring.

"Hey, buddie!" he shouted above the roar of traffic. "Did you see it?"

"See what?" Benny managed to yell back.

"Why, that six-legged freak, of course!"

"Oh," said Benny. A sudden comprehending illumination flooded his brain. But before he could answer, a dark something whisked past them as they neared the end of the tunnel. Into the bright sunshine it dashed, and he groaned aloud. A giant flagellate! Six feet high it stood, with its leaf-tail closed in a backward position. It was flashing along at a terrific rate.

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THE onrushing stream of automobiles, emerging from the second tunnel, underwent a sudden convulsion as their drivers spied the approaching monster. The foremost skidded desperately curbward, over which it bounced and thence into the concrete guard wall. The next car collided with the protruding back of the first, and a second later a dozen speeding vehicles had piled up in a terrible wreckage. In a flash the flagellate was past them and into the tunnel.

The motorcycle officer had dropped behind, but Benny continued into the second tunnel before his startled wits could function. Quickly he drove toward the curb, with a vague intention of assisting the stricken motorists. But before he could stop a siren sounded behind him and a police car roared by, guns flaming and reverberating through the tube like ten cannons. He almost ran upon the sidewalk in his endeavor to get out of the way.

Swiftly the patrol car covered the remaining distance in the tunnel, crossed the short intervening space, and melted into the gloom of the third tunnel, hot on the tail of the lone flagellate.

Benny was trembling visibly and a cold sweat covered his brow. Accounts in the papers certainly hadn't been exaggerated! He drove hurriedly on. The place was getting too hot for him! He eased his conscience by telling himself that other people would stop to help the injured.

The third tunnel was nearly blocked with stalled and smashed autos. There seemed to be no casualties, for apparently uninjured people were climbing from their demolished vehicles as he went past. Of sign of the flagellate or police car there was none.

A minute later when he emerged upon the open street it seemed that the whole city had been aroused. Near and far in various directions sirens wailed dismally, drawing nearer. He supposed they were ambulances or squads of radio cars coming to aid in the chase. The ordinarily fast city traffic was going twice as fast; motorcycle officers were everywhere, paying no attention to recklessness, and police cars fairly bristling with guns and men were rushing past with sirens screaming.

At last Benny reached the open country. He breathed a sigh of relief. The city had been like a disturbed ant-hill—utter confusion, chaos. He could vision the whole country—the world, in complete disorder! An earth overrun by a fearful creature that multiplied with incredible quickness and in staggering numbers! Death everywhere; the human race fighting for its very existence!

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WEEKS crawled slowly by. Over four months had passed since Benny made his precipitate exit from civilization. He had gone immediately to an isolated cabin high in the San Gabriel Mountains. Because of its very remoteness he had seen few people, and these only in the distance.

Often he would venture a few miles from his dwelling to hunt rabbits. But most of the time he spent beside the fireplace, warming himself and thinking. He felt fairly secure in his hide-out. Extreme cold and snow would hold back the great mass of flagellates that were sure to come. But if he did chance upon one of the creatures he could defend himself with a large saber that he carried strapped to his waist. He had also grown to dread humans almost more than the flagellates—for any day he expected a large influx of people to the mountains. Like refugees escaping from an overwhelming flood they would seek the higher portions of the earth—that would be man's last stand.

Benny was curious of what was happening in the great land below. He estimated that no less than a million million flagellates were about now, probably most of them in southern California. People wouldn't be able to step outside their homes without running into a dozen of the things. The whole army would be down there futilely shooting at them and doing more damage than good. A million million flagellates would need lots of meat to eat.

At last Benny was forced to get in touch with civilization. His store of provisions was dangerously low and would need replenishing before the next snow-in. He had no intention of going without food for even one meal.

He made a list of supplies and drove sixty miles to the nearest store. As he expected, there was no sign of a flagellate along the way. Time would be needed for them to invade the vast stretches of mountain.

THE store was located on the edge of the desert, far from the main highway and was used as an outfitting post by miners. The old fellow behind the counter seemed habitually silent, so Benny determined not to inquire about the flagellates unless the man mentioned them himself. He might think he was drunk or crazy, in case he had not heard of them yet. The fellow was eyeing him in a none too covertly manner as it was.

The order had been silently filled, but suddenly the old man caught Benny unawares.

"You out prospecting for gold, pardner?"

"Huh? . . . Oh, No! That is . . ." Benny thought fast. Obvi-

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ously he couldn't tell the truth. "I mean, I'm hunting for silver too," he finished lamely.

The man eyed him suspiciously. "Then you better buy some cans o' this stuff to eat. Everybody gets it now-a-days—good to eat in place of bread."

The fellow was as nosey as an old woman, thought Benny, glancing hastily at a can the storekeeper held out for his inspection. There was a picture of a many-legged creature on the label.

"I don't like canned crab meat," he snapped. All he wanted was to collect his supplies and get back to his cabin as soon as possible.

"But this ain't crab meat!" explained the man. "It's the meat of a big, funny lookin' six-legged critter that. . . ."

Benny froze in his tracks. "What's that? An animal with six legs?"

"Yeah! Ain't you heard about it? A bunch o' these things appeared from nowheres in L.A. one day—gentle as lambs, though—an' so people started to can 'em. The stuff tastes better'n cake. There's a boom down there now 'cause the things can't live in no place but southern California—the weather, you know. Everybody's gone crazy over the stuff. They're shipping it all over the world. Millions o'dollars is being made . . . what's the matter, son? You sick?"

Benny had dropped to a bench. His face was deathly pale. "Packing the things . . . millions of dollars being made?"

"Yeah. But they can't get enuff of 'em to can 'cause everybody around there goes out and gets one or two of the critters to eat for themselves. They're start'n regular ranches where they can raise 'em, though. Do you want to buy a can?"

Benny weakly nodded his head.

THE END

Through Time and Space With Benedict Breadfruit: II

THE accepted method for removing space lice from the hull of a ship was by sandblasting, but the boys around the space docks noticed that Benedict Breadfruit's shiny hull was not pitted either by space lice or by sandblasting. Breadfruit used hydrogen cyanide to remove the pests, but he had never told anyone about it.

"Come, Breadfruit," said one of the spaceport officials, "tell us how you remove your burden of pediculous pests!"

Breadfruit gestured at his HCN generator. "I gas 'em off."

—GRANDALL BARRETTON

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A Classic Reprint from AMAZING STORIES, September, 1929

the YOUNG OLD MAN

By EARL L. BELL

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

IMMORTALITY is one of the oldest themes in science fiction and probably in all literature, possibly because of the fascination it holds for a human race confronted at all times and in all places by "a realization of mortality." The most profound influence on the literature of immortality has been the legend of the Wandering Jew, who, according to myth, was a porter to the Romans named Cartiphilus and is reputed to have struck Jesus after sentencing by Pilate, urging him to move faster. According to legend, Jesus turned to him and said: "I am going, but you shall wait until I return."

Tales of the Wandering Jew have become so sizeable a portion of literature that they have inspired an entire book by Joseph Gaer on the subject of The Legend of the Wandering Jew, *published in paperback by New American Library in 1961. Stories of the Wandering Jew still appear in modern science fiction by modern writers as prominent as Nelson S. Bond, Wilson Tucker and Walter M. Miller.*

However, more common are tales which are an outgrowth of the Wandering Jew legend, but whose approach has been altered so that one has to scrutinize carefully for identification. Today, we frequently find the very long-lived possessor of strange powers in the guise of a virtual hillbilly or alien, confounding the scientists and civilization with his unusual talents.

Gramps Schneider in Robert Heinlein's Waldo *is of indeterminate age, but unquestionably very, very* old *since he still has posters extolling the virtues of "free silver" in his cabin and*

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the story takes place in our future! Clifford D. Simak in Census *tells of a youth who is living in the backwoods, 163 years old and barely adolescent! Murray Leinster's* Strange Case of John Kingman *is the furthest advanced from the Wandering Jew legend, wherein an inmate of an insane asylum lives on and on endlessly. All these characters have two things in common. They are exceedingly long-lived and they have supernormal attributes.*

The Young Old Man *by Earl L. Bell deserves printing on the basis of intrinsic merit alone, but beyond that it deserves recognition as the transition story in the science fiction magazines between the ancient legend of the Wandering Jew and today's outgrowth of the theme as utilized by Robert A. Heinlein, Clifford D. Simak and Murray Leinster.*

The immortal in Bell's story is not the Wandering Jew but he recognizes his affinity to him. He is a man of strange personal qualities and powers who resides in the primitive Ozarks. *Unlike the modern writers, Bell is neither afraid or unable to reveal the origin of his "immortal" and his explanation is worthy of special discussion except that it would reveal his punch line. The device he utilizes in his ending was so effective that it was picked up by Manly Wade Wellman for the "socker" in* Twice in Time.

In the canons of science fiction, Bell is known to have contributed only two stories. In addition to The Young Old Man, *his short novel* The Moon of Doom *led off the first issue of* AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY *and was outstanding for its originality of ideas, but spoiled by excessive compression.*

The contribution he made to the development of modern science fiction in The Young Old Man *has received no direct credit until now.*

WE MET the Young Old Man —Glenn Fleming and I— during our first camp-out in the heart of the Ozarks.

A cloudburst that sent the rain through the roof of our shack had ruined our *cache* of rations, and we decided to replenish at the nearest settlement, some ten miles distant.

Our rackety car managed to carry us safely over the makeshift mountain roads, and we found that the settlement comprised only five or six scattered houses and one store, a typical cross-roads affair, whose front bore numerous patent medicine and cut-plug advertisements amid which could be discerned

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I tried to free myself, but the devils in the wires were too cunning.

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the lettering: CLINTON FANCHER —GENERAL MERCHANDISE.

Quite traditionally, the proprietor was sitting on a soap box inside the store engaged in the ancient art of whittling when we entered. There was something about him that focused our attention immediately he rose to greet us; and when he spoke, we knew he was no ordinary hillman.

"A particularly fine day after yesterday's deluge, my lads. One of the heaviest rains these old hills have had in more than a decade. What can I do for you?"

In spite of his inordinate quid of tobacco, his articulation was perfect, but there was an alien quality in his voice that was baffling—a slight but peculiar accent that defied definition. His English was good, but it hinted of other tongues, a combination of them, in a most cosmopolitan sort of way.

Queer, that voice of his, but his appearance was even more bizarre. I remarked him closely as he was filling our order and noted that Glenn, who had strolled over to the counter and picked up a book that lay by the cheese box, also was studying him.

There are men who are old for their years, and men young for their years, but there is always some clue—the eyes, as a rule—that enables one to come within ten years of their correct age, at the outside. But not so with the man before us. I first thought he was no more than forty. Then, noticing his graying hair and slight flabbiness of muscle, I guessed he was about fifty. But when I found opportunity to look closely into his eyes, I received such a shock that I wanted to shudder.

Set in a face almost youthful, they were ancient beyond reckoning, as are the Ozark hills.

Dewlapped, timeworn and sunken. . . . Yet they were not the lack-lustre eyes of senility. There were life and light in them, but of a kind I did not know. Weariness—infinite weariness—was there, and a sorrowful sort of wisdom, as if they had gazed too long upon the Valley of Baca. Still, I repeat, they were not the watery eyes of age. Rather, I fancied, they were orbs such as the Sphinx might have, should she rise suddenly to vigorous life, under doom to remember all. Yes, that was it—the storekeeper's eyes had seen too much, and were unable to forget.

I thought I had managed somehow to conceal my amazement, and was quite certain he had betrayed no embarrassment; but a moment later, none the less, he produced from his pocket a pair of dark glasses and put them on.

Glenn, registering puzzlement, was still thumbing the book when

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the grocer finished with our order, and when he laid the volume down, I noticed for the first time that it had no cover.

"Well, boys, I presume you are strangers in these parts," the merchant's enigmatic voice put in, as we paid him and made ready to depart. "And camping out, I deduce."

We introduced ourselves and informed him briefly that we were down from St. Louis for our first stay in the Ozarks, and were "roughing it" at Robin Creek, where the fishing had been very good until the recent rain.

"The water will be too muddy for any catch except catfish until to-morrow, I should say," he commented. "Come to see me again before you leave, lads. I seldom see anyone from the outside. I have been living here twenty years and haven't been ten miles from the hamlet in that time. I guess I'm getting lonesome—and loquacious. Sometimes I find myself looking out upon the hills and talking to them. I've seen nearly all the mountains in the world, boys, and I love the Ozarks best of all. They are so old they seem to be *en rapport* with one who has come to realize the futility of it all. They were once quite haughty hills, you know, but the eons have worn them down. The day will come when they shall be no more. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*" (Thus the world's glory passes.)

"Then I take it you are not a native of this section, and must have traveled quite a bit," I said, hiding my astonishment as his linguistic display.

"You're right, my friend. My natal cry was uttered far from these hills, and I've outdone the Wandering Jew himself in my day. Come over some time and let me bore you with some of my experiences."

And then, to Glenn as we were starting the car: "You must come too, my lad, and I'll tell you about that book, if you'll promise to believe me."

IMAGINE a country storekeeper in this neck of the woods using Latin and reading dog Latin. It's uncanny!" Glenn's voice rose above the rattle of the flivver.

"But not as uncanny as his eyes," I responded. "Did you see them?"

"No, I was too interested in the book. So that's why he put on his glasses?"

"I guess so, and I'm glad he did. His eyes really gave me the creeps. They're incongruous. At once young and old, and there's something odious about them—no, not that, but sadness and weariness so great as to make them repellent. I once read a gruesome tale about the dead-alive, a group of people for whose

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souls life and death fought to a stalemate and finally arrived at a ghastly compromise whereby their victims must live forever in a plight that called for death. Well, I imagine those people must have had eyes like those of our friend back there."

"Oh, wake up, Bill, you talk as though you had seen a ghost or a vampire," my companion chided. "The fellow has some peculiar optical ailment, that's all. But I'd like for you to tell me what he is doing with that book. It's a medieval philosophical work and is written in a monkish sort of Latin that puzzles me. There was no way to tell who wrote it, nor when it was published. The binding and the title page were gone, and the name doesn't appear at the top of the pages as in modern books. It must be hundreds of years old, and is worth a fortune, sure as your name is Bill Semms."

Glenn was a hopeless bibliophile, and I knew he would not rest until he had learned the history of the volume. Therefore I expected him to propose that we pay the storeman another visit, and he did so, before we reached camp. I prevailed upon him, however, to wait until we broke camp and stop by the store on our way out of the mountains.

A VISITOR came to our shack that night, an old mountaineer named Harkins who lived about a mile up the creek, and who had paid us a previous call. Long, lean, bearded and rugged, he was a typical backhillman in all save one respect: he was garrulous—to a fault.

"Come down this way this mo'nin' bout noon to see ef the cloudburst had washed you all away," he said by way of greeting, "and found you-all gone. Reckoned you-all had packed up and hit fer home, but heard your car a-rattlin' over the hills while I was a-crossin' the creek this evenin' (afternoon), so I jest drapped in to tell you-all that the fishin' will be all right again in a day or tew."

"The rain was too much for our roof and ruined the groceries we had in the corner over there," I explained, "so we had to run up to the settlement and buy more."

"Which settlement?"

"I don't know its name. It's about ten miles west of here."

"That's Rossville. So you bought 'em from that Fancher fellow, hey? Pecooliar old chap, ain't he? They call him the 'Young Old Man.'"

Glenn moved closer and handed our guest a cigar.

"We didn't pay much attention to him," I lied, trying to veil my curiosity. "Why do you call him peculiar?"

"Ef you had saw his eyes,

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you'd a-called him wuss than pecooliar. Guess he had 'em covered up, though. Most gen'ly does, now."

"He did strike us as somewhat unusual," I admitted. "Tell us something about him."

"Well," he began, lighting his cigar. "Fancher ain't a bad sort o' feller—'ceptin' his eyes. Nobody 'round here don't know much 'bout him. He's a mystery. Come to Rossville 'bout twenty year ago and bought out a sto'. He's a furriner, all right, but nobody don't know jest where he come from. Friendly enough, but never would say much 'bout hisself, or 'bout anything else, for that matter. They do say, though, that he's kind o' lossened up here o' late. I ain't saw him in nearly two year."

He paused and stroked his beard.

"But his eyes—what's the matter with them?" I prompted.

"Nobody don't know what in tarnation's the matter with 'em. They was kind o' pecooliar when he fust come here, and they been gettin' wusser and wusser ever since. Got so bad 'bout five year ago that the young uns at Rossville thought he was the bogey man and were scairt to go to his sto', even for the scraps o' candy he'd give 'em now and then. He started to wearin' a pair o' big black glasses 'bout that time, and I hyears he's sca-cely ever seen without 'em now. He can see out o' them eyes o' his'n good as anybody, though."

"Why do they call him the 'Young Old Man'?" Glenn put in.

"I was a-comin' to that. It's mostly 'cause o' his eyes. Ef you had saw 'em, you'd understand. Bet old Methuselah hisself didn't have a set o' eyes any older lookin' than Fancher's. They look like they had saw the flood, the locusts and all them other plagues the Bible tells 'bout. Ef it warn't for that, he could pass for man o' forty-five, easy. And that's the funny part o' it—'ceptin' his eyes, he don't look a year older than when he fust come here. Yes, sir, there's somethin' mighty pecooliar 'bout Fancher. But he's a pretty good sort, jest the same, and will do anybody a favor ef he can. The smallpox broke out in these parts 'bout ten year ago, and Fancher closed his sto' and nussed at least a dozen families. Didn't seem scairt at all."

THREE days later we heard the Young Old Man was dead.

Found lifeless in his bed in the room back of his store, according to old Harkins, who brought the news to us.

But the excited Harkins had no particulars. In fact, he wasn't certain the report was true. He had "hyeared" it, he said, and was preparing to go to Rossville

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to investigate. "Mought be a murder," he added, morbidly, if not hopefully. "We ain't had no excitement in these hills in three year."

Glenn proposed that we ride over and see for ourselves. I surmised he was anxious about the fate of that book, but what he meant to do about it, if the owner was really dead, was more than I could fathom.

We invited Harkins to accompany us.

The coroner had claimed the body when we arrived, and there was to be an inquest shortly, the agitated villagers informed us.

A few minutes later, after Harkins had lost himself in the crowd, Glenn and I, accompanied by the coroner, viewed the Young Old Man's remains.

It was evident that he had died without a struggle. The body, fully clothed and face up, lay across the bed. His weird eyes were forever closed, yet there was something unearthly about his features—an expression of transcendent *joy* that centered in the strangest smile I have ever seen on the face of the dead. Not inscrutable, that smile. It told of long-sought surcease of flagellating weariness; of infinite gladness at having laid the burden down.

"I can't understand it," the coroner's voice interrupted my thoughts. "He looks like he is glad he's dead. A plain case of heart failure, I guess, but I must go through with the inquest soon as the doctor arrives."

The room of death was small and sparsely furnished. The bed, two chairs, a trunk, a table and a small oil stove were about all it contained. An oil lamp stood on the table, and beside it lay a coverless book and the Young Old Man's dark glasses. The walls were bare save for a cracked mirror on one side of the fireplace and what appeared to be a framed motto on the other.

Glenn moved over and picked up the book soon as it caught his eyes.

"This is a valuable volume," he said to the coroner. "I would have given him a hundred dollars for it."

"Well, you may be able to buy it from Preacher Fellows," the official drawled. "I understand Fancher made some sort of a will a few months ago and left the pastor everything he had."

"Where does the minister live?" Glenn asked, eagerly.

"In that little white house over yonder," pointing out of the window to a cottage about two hundred yards away. "Preacher Fellows is a superannuated circuit rider, and is going blind. He was Fancher's closest friend."

Glenn laid the book down reluctantly and walked over to the motto on the wall.

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"Come here, Bill, you and the coroner," he beckoned a moment later. "This is interesting."

It was not a motto. It was part of Walt Whitman's chant to death:

"Come lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate Death,
Dark Mother, always gliding near on soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant for thee, I glorify thee above all,
Approach, strong deliveress."

SO YOU want to buy the book? I don't know its value, but I think the hundred dollars you offer is too much, my son. I'll take it, though, for God knows I'll need it before long. It's a strange volume, isn't it? Fancher used to pore over it all the time, but he'd never tell me what was in it."

We were sitting in the old circuit rider's humble parlor. It was night. The Fancher inquest had been late in starting and had lasted until nearly sunset. The verdict was death from natural causes.

Glenn gave the minister the money and we prepared to depart, but he entreated us to stay a little longer. It seemed that something was troubling him.

"I'm worried, my young friends," he admitted after a while. "There's something I want to show you. You say you are college men, and maybe you'll be able to help me."

He reached into a drawer of the small table around which we were sitting and produced a large envelope.

"I suppose I should have opened this before the inquest was held," he said, "but was so shaken over my friend's death that I forgot it.

"Fancher made a will shortly before he died, and his wish was that I sell his store and keep the money against the day when these cataracts have finished blinding me. The same day he drew up the will, he gave me this letter. I was to open it on the day he died. I had just finished trying to read it when you knocked at the door. My eyes are so bad I couldn't study it closely, but I read enough to make my reason totter. God knows I believe Fancher was insane when he wrote it—insane all the time—and we didn't know it.

"Here my son," handing me the letter, "read it aloud. I want to know just what it means before I show it to the coroner. I'm just a plain old country preacher and know almost nothing about the things he mentions. But I

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pray that Fancher's story isn't true. A suicide's soul—no, I won't say that. Go ahead with the reading, son."

He turned the flickering flame of the kerosene lamp a bit higher, and this is what I read:

THE TRUE STORY OF THE LIFE OF CLINTON FANCHER, 1269-1926

I, Clinton Fancher, *alias* numerous other names, being in full possession of all my faculties and having determined to die, write this, my life story, on the day that marks the 657th anniversary of my birth.

Knowing that none will believe, I will be brief. And knowing that the English used by the old friar and myself is scarcely intelligible now, I will be modern.

I was born in the year 1269, in the ancient town of Basingstoke, which is in Hampshire, England.

It was in my twenty-fifth year that I met the thaumaturgist and traded life for *life*.

He was known as the Sorcerer, and I met him near Ilchester, in Somerset, in 1293, the year before he died.

He was an old man of nearly 80 then, and had returned to Somerset, the place of his birth, to spend his last days after a long imprisonment.

The sorcerer was a Franciscan of Oxford, and one of the most famous men of his day. A devotee of knowledge and a man of science, his renown had spread over most of Europe. He probably did more than any other man toward ushering in the Renaissance. He prophesied the airplane, motor vehicle, steamship, submarine and many other inventions which I have lived to see perfected. His scientific discoveries were among the first ever made by an Englishman. His writings marked him as probably the greatest philosopher since the Greeks.

So great were his accomplishments, that they proved his undoing and made of his life an intellectual tragedy. He had always been considered a rebellious member of the Franciscan order and was distrusted by his fellow friars. At length he was accused of dealing in black art, and finally, when the church condemned his books, was thrown into prison for fourteen years.

He had pursued his writings and investigations while in prison, and it was rumored he had emerged with the formula of an elixir that would enable one to live forever.

I had been ill three years with a disease which was later to become known as tuberculosis. I felt I couldn't live much longer. And I was in love. She was a bonny Hampshire lass with eyes like lapis lazuli.

And that is why I made my way to the house of the sorcerer.

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He received me kindly, did this old friar of the broad brow and piercing eyes, whom prison suffering had wasted to a shadow.

"So you would like to live forever, my lad?" he asked after hearing my story. "I wouldn't advise it, even if it were possible. The man who discovers an elixir such as you mention would be the greatest malefactor the world has known. No, I have no such formula. Don't you see, I'd be burned at the stake for witchcraft if what you have heard were true?"

But I pleaded with him to try at least to heal me. I told him of the lass back in Hampshire. At length he promised to dose me.

"Come back to-night, my son, and I'll see what I can do," he said, a strange light coming into his eyes.

THAT light was burning fiercer when I returned. I was almost afraid of him. But he took me by the hand reassuringly and led me into his study.

"There is no drug that will heal you," he said. "You must waste away and die unless—"

"Unless what?" I cried.

"Would you really like to live indefinitely, my son?"

"Yes, forever—forever and a day."

"Yours is the voice of youth," he meditated. "You do not know what you say. I do not want the stain of a suicide's blood on my soul. The very knowledge that one had interminable life would lead to self-destruction. No, lad, life is usually too long as it is."

"But not for me," I protested. "I am only twenty-four, and must die—die without having lived."

"It is so," he agreed. The strange light in his eyes flared up again, brighter than the ray of the candle on the table between us. "Come with me."

He led me into another room and pointed to a silver crucifix on the wall.

"You are of the faith?"

"Yes, Father."

"Then kneel before the crucifix and swear by all the saints that you will never reveal, while I am living, what I am about to do."

I swore.

When I rose he had opened a cleverly concealed trap-door in the floor behind me. There was a ladder leading to the basement. I followed him down.

The cellar was not more than ten feet square. A table stood in one corner. On it was a sizable black box with wires running from it.

The old friar set the candle on the table and placed a hand on the box.

"I'm not certain it will grant you immortality," he said. "If I were, I would not have brought

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you here. But it may heal you, at least. And if it does more than that, may God forgive me."

"What is in it?" I gasped. Had Lucifer and all the hosts of Hell sprung from the box I would not have been surprised. You must remember that it was still the Dark Ages.

"Ah, that I knew what it contains," the old man replied. "But it has no life, as we understand the term. And it cannot harm you, though it may cause you to fall asleep for a while. Are you ready, my son? If so, bare your wrists and ankles."

The seeming necromancy of the proceedings almost paralyzed my medieval mind. Grim fear gripped me and for a moment I wanted to cry out and flee the house. Would to God I had!

That the sorcerer was in league with Satan I had no doubt. And probably he was trying to betray me into selling my soul. No, I told myself, I would have none of it. But at that instant the old man's eyes gleamed once more with that unholy light—hypnotic, I suppose—and my fear subsided.

Stupefied, I began rolling up my sleeves, and when the candlelight accentuated the emaciation of my arms, I no longer hesitated.

The sorcerer must have sensed my decision. He began fumbling with the wires that ran from the box, and I noticed there was a metal clasp at the end of each of them.

At his gesture I moved nearer the table and he fastened the clasps about my limbs. I fancied his lips were moving in prayer.

"Ready, my son?"

"Ready, Father, and God help me!"

There was a sort of key in one side of the box. The sorcerer gave it a turn.

A thousand fires began racing through my veins. I jerked spasmodically. I tried to free myself of the clasps, but the devils in the wires were too cunning. A sputtering sound was coming from the box, and my horror-dilated eyes beheld small streams of purple sparks issuing from the holes where the wires emerged. In spite of my pain, I was fascinated. I had never seen fire so beautiful, I thought, and thinking, lost consciousness.

I WAS stretched on the cellar's earthen floor when I revived. The sorcerer was bending over me solicitously.

"You are all right now," he said. "I'm sorry it hurt you. I did not know."

"How long was I dead?" I asked, rising and finding that the clasps had been removed.

"You slept only a few minutes. It was a slumber I don't understand."

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I glanced at the box. It had ceased its sputtering.

"The devils in the box—where are they?" I inquired.

"There were no devils, my son. It was a natural force. Let's return upstairs—it's too damp down here—and I will try to explain.

"Yes, it was a natural force, my lad," when we were back in his study and I had sipped a glass of his wine. "The ancient Greeks called it *elektron*. Thales of Miletus experimented with it 600 years before Christ lived. I think it's the same phenomenon that causes lightning.

"I have gone much deeper into the mystery than did Thales—too deep, perhaps. I have learned how to produce it and partially control it. I have also discovered that it can kill, as does the lightning, and that, while it cannot produce life, it can prolong it *ad infinitum*.

"And since I have been out of prison I have made a prodigious step. *I have isolated its life element.*

"The fire you saw coming from the box, my lad, was literally the spark of life.

"I first applied the life element to species of the Ephemerida, insects that live only a few hours, and the result was that they lived for weeks. I next tried it on small animals, mostly mice, but it is too early to remark its effects on them. I noticed, however, that diseased rodents were immediately restored to health and that the same was true in the case of a dog that was nearly dead when it came into my hands.

"Therefore, my young friend from Basingstoke, I believe you need have no further fear of the disease that has been consuming you. And if the life spark has given you physical immortality, forgive me, my son, and curse me not in the dreary days to come.

"Go you back and wed the maiden, and my blessing be upon you and yours forever."

AND back to Basingstoke I hurried, leaving the house of the sorcerer the next morning and carrying with me one of his books which he had given me as a remembrance.

As I trekked my way homeward I knew I had been healed. I could feel life—new life—surging through me, bringing vigor, I had never known, and ere I reached Basingstoke, firm flesh had filled out my frame.

But I was never to wed the lass with eyes like lapis; nor, through the more than six centuries that have followed, any other. . . . The spark of life, in giving life, had killed the life within me.

I remained in Basingstoke twenty years without aging a day in appearance. Then the

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townsfolk began to accuse me of having bartered my soul to Satan for eternal youth. I tried to explain. They laughed.

And then I began my wanderings, the loneliest, most accursed of mortals, an object of curiosity or suspicion wherever I tarried long; driven from clime to clime by fear and sensitiveness; an anachronism spurred ever onward by a life that prayed for death.

I was in Germany when the Black Death swept Europe; in France, that day in May when Joan of Arc was burned in the streets of Rouen. The Maid was a pathetic figure, weeping as she walked to the stake. And, seeking death in battle, I fought under many flags. I was with the German troops when they pillaged Rome; with Blake when he destroyed the Spanish fleet at Tenerife; with the Royalists against Cromwell, fought against my native land when the American Colonies struggled for freedom; with it again in its wars against Napoleon. Wounded only once.

But I said I would be brief.

I have been in America now since 1880. Twenty years ago I came to the Ozarks, seeking sanctuary in their loneliness. My respite is ending. The friendly hill people have begun to wonder. They are calling me the Young Old Man—a name I have had in many lands. Even the children are afraid of my eyes.

It has been said in truth that the eyes are the windows of the soul. Mine reflects my weariness, if not my age. But it is only in the past few years that their incongruity has grown into gargoyle hideousness. The soul is bursting through the windows at last.

I am weary for oblivion. For five hundred years I have sighed for the waters of Lethe. But I have been a craven coward, afraid, because of the medieval superstition that still lies coiled in my soul, to summon death. An eternity of monotony behind me; centuries of memories that will not fade. An eternity of loathsome life before me. It shall not be. I will not go on. If it is true that God has existed from eternity, I am sure He will understand.

I have the formula of a potent but kindly poison I have remembered from the Dark Ages. I will brew it soon and drink it, and drinking, sing out with the poet, "Approach, strong deliveress!"

The sorcerer, in the book he gave me, cried out against the futility of life. The name of the volume is *Opus Tertium*. I still have it, though I destroyed its binding and title page centuries ago when priestly prejudice still execrated the memory of its author, whose name was ROGER BACON.

THE END

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A Classic Reprint from AMAZING STORIES, February, 1935

The Tale of the Atom

By PHILIP DENNIS CHAMBERLAIN

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

To write a very good brief story has always been difficult in science fiction. If it is not to be classed as a prose pastel or a literary vignette, the short-short story requires a "snap" or surprise ending. This is difficult enough in general fiction where names of places or objects become symbols conveying a background which familiarity makes possible for the reader to take for granted. Science fiction has the problem of establishing the background before it can ring in the trick ending. The Tale of the Atom *is the only science fiction story ever accredited to its author. Yet it is impressive for the number and scope of ideas compressed into so little space and because it actually contains* two *surprise endings.*

ATWAR spun his motor-chair deftly about and rolled over to the blue enameled all-metal cabinet. Pulling out a drawer he withdrew a small instrument and sped back to his slate-topped workbench. Once there he made a few adjustments in the weird machine that stood upon it.

A weird machine it was, a jumbled mass of wires that led to a small, porcelain-like chamber within which the wire seemed to be fused into a solid mass. Above the chamber was a compound microscope of peculiar shape, with a double eyepiece and a sort of keyboard mounted on its side. There were other peculiar things about the microscope; for instance had one been able to examine it, he would

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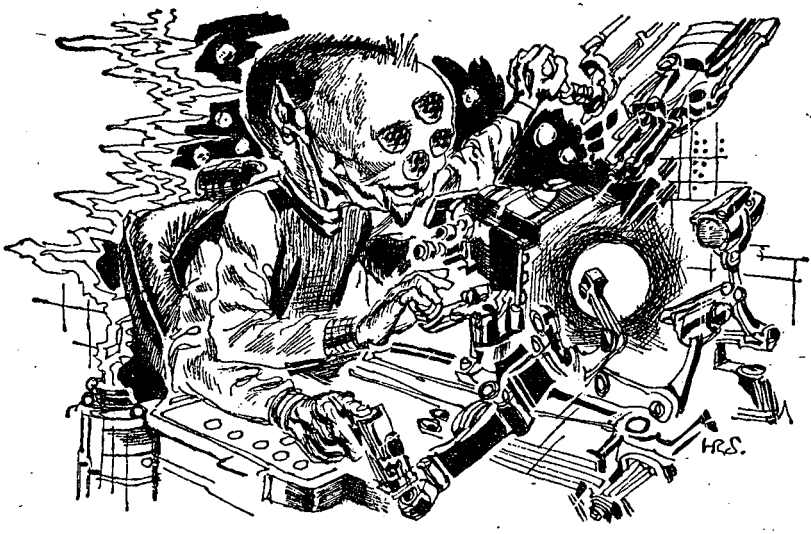
Illustrated by SUMMERS



have noticed that all the illumination was provided through a microscopic aperture underneath the chamber, and that the light was artificial, provided by a mercury lamp of some type and filtered through two lenses before it reached the hole. Had Atwar been in a talkative mood, which he never was, he would have explained, that the purpose of those lenses was to increase the magnifying power in a peculiar system of his own.

Atwar was quite proud of the affair for from bottom to top it was his own invention and the thing he proposed to do with it, of course with the help of his assistants, would undoubtedly astound scientific circles if he succeeded, and he knew he would succeed.

While he made a minor adjustment with two right hands, he prepared a pad and pencil with a left hand and reached for a bottle of small transparent crystals with the other left hand. An assistant rolled briskly into the room, one of Atwar's four huge compound eyes turned from the instrument to him; in silence the assistant received the thought-order and sped out of the room. A second later he was back bringing with him a group of thought-readers who were to read Atwar's mind during the experiment and to accurately record his impressions at first hand; this made it equiva-

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lent to having four separate people perform the experiment.

Silently Atwar bent over the microscope, two huge eyes focussed upon the stage, a third was on the paper pad on which he would write the results of the experiment, while the fourth eye gazed straight at the group of thought-readers, in order to facilitate their task, for it is through the eyes that the mind is most easily read. With deft six jointed fingers he picked up a pair of tweezers and placed a minute crystal of the substance, which was in the bottle, upon the stage. He fingered a button on the keyboard and the stage became illuminated. Under the enormous magnification the myriad of wires no longer seemed fused together, rather they were seen to be skillfully woven into a fine screen of some sort and on that screen lay the crystal; he adjusted the focus.

CAREFULLY he twisted the knobs that controlled the microscope's adjustments, the crystal faded into vast nothingness. But was it nothingness? The blackness seemed to be filled with small, blowing points. He gave the knob another twist. Slowly materializing out of the blackness, a dull reddish ball about the diameter of a cent appeared, and about it spinning at great speed were minute specks, like grains of dust in the sunlight, or was it only his eyes? His fingers adjusted the knobs and the red ball grew to the size of a small orange, covering the whole stage. He slid the stage slightly to one side and three of the specks came into view, now as large as pinheads. By careful manipulation he counted eight; it was as he had thought; now he must finish; the committee met at seven and he wished to have a report ready. He made a rapid calculation as to what wire the atom must be over, and pressed a button. There was a flash that half blinded him, but that was all; he had miscalculated. Speedily he worked out the correction on the pad by his side and pressed another button.

* * *

The earth was terror stricken. Men no longer rode daily to their work in the great synthetic food plants; the huge, pleasure parks were deserted, for in the year G73000 the end of the world had come at last. Panic had descended upon the earth and science was helpless. Prophets of a god who had been forgotten over seventy-eight thousand years before, (and reckoning in old time it was now the year 86,300 A.D.), were arising and proving by a forgotten volume called "The Holy Bible" that all this had been prophesied years ago

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and that now was the time for repentance. There arose also another and more generally followed cult which held the direct opposite of the first, namely that the end was here and now was the time for pleasure; the streets of the cities were the scenes of wild debaucheries, and robbery and murder were rampant. Also there was a small group which, strange to say, kept their heads. They were chiefly the great scientists of the planet, those who knew it was up to them to save the world. All day long and far into the night they worked, trying to devise schemes that stood a chance of being successful; they had all the laboratories of the world at their disposal and they worked with feverish haste, most of them even taking to a vice which had died out centuries before—dope—to keep them going; and they had to go on; if they failed the world was doomed.

DR. ALICE NOAH was undoubtedly the head of the group, she had been head of the government laboratories for a bare two years, when the catastrophe came, but already she had a world-wide reputation and she was unanimously chosen to head the body. A part of her speech of acceptance of leadership is quoted, so the reader may understand the situation.

"My colleagues," she said. "we all realize that it is on us that the fate of the world depends; we have been called together in the eleventh hour to undertake a task it would be difficult to complete in a lifetime, and we *must* do it! . . . We should have taken warning three hundred years ago, when Sirius was wiped out by a strange flash, but our ancestors took no heed and now we find ourselves attacked without adequate or even partial protection. . . . We all know what is threatened, something is rapidly exploding in the sun! Unless it is stopped we have only six months left, before we shall be without a solar system, and we shall go flying out into space, a dead, cold meteorite. Ladies and gentlemen, it is up to us to see that it is stopped!!! Already the sun is showing signs of vast electrical disturbances and from Mount Wilson comes the report that a blue flame of some sort is rapidly approaching Sol, our sun. My friends, we know that flame is the same thing that destroyed Sirius and unless something is done it will do the same thing to our sun. I await your suggestions."

Many ideas were advanced and rejected. For the most part they were as foolish as the theories of those who set out in space-ships for Mars, not realizing that, with the break-up of

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the sun, Mars would be as badly off as earth. A number thought of establishing some sort of a counter-current, but it was pointed out that it was not known whether or not the "destroying flame," as the religious fanatics had named it, was electrical or not, and that, if it were such, there was not enough electrical power on earth to successfully neutralize it. Another group tried to make out that the dangers were overestimated but without successfully convincing even themselves. The greater part of the group, however, could think of nothing and so they remained deadlocked for two months.

It was the sixteenth of Sol (thirteen-month years had been adopted centuries back) that Dr. Hubbard Granstedt proposed his plan, and the entire convention stood amazed at the bearded old patriarch's suggestion. For two precious weeks it was fought for and against, but the doctor had his facts and figures so clearly disposed that it was finally adopted. Then all the body went into action, and by that statement it is meant that twenty billion tireless robots started to labor, day and night, to complete the terrific task.

Everything was in readiness by September eleventh and the world was waiting, waiting breathlessly for the result of the test of the forlorn hope of humanity. From points all over the globe huge structures, like the long range guns of a bygone day, were pointed skyward, and a network of some sort of pipes completely checkered the globe. An anxious world was waiting its time.

THE eighteenth of September was the fatal date. At three-thirty in the afternoon the blue flash streaked across the solar heavens, heedlessly annihilating Venus and Halley's Comet in its course and struck the sun. There was a huge flash, the like of which had never been seen before, and the sun crashed into hundreds of flaming pieces which flared up in the solar heavens each a little star in itself. Throughout the entire universe there was a jar as the stars readjusted themselves to the loss of their brother and things started to quiet down.

It was the instant the flame had struck, that Dr. Granstedt had thrown the switch which was to save or ruin the world. From the vast network of pipes that lay over the world had arisen huge clouds of gasses that dimmed the explosion of Sol to all human eyes. Slowly, in great billowing clouds, they went upwards, until they seemed to merge into one vast mass that completely surrounded the

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atmosphere. Then the change took place. The clouds seemed to lose all cloudlike aspect and to take on the appearance of a solid ceiling; there was a singing sound as of metal understrain and then all was quiet. An experimental rocket was projected; up, up it went until it reached the ceiling; then it seemed to strike something solid and in another instant it was falling back to earth, its steel head buckled by the impact of a collision. Dr. Grandstedt smiled for the first time in many months; it was as he had hoped and planned; the gases, no longer warmed by the heat of the sun, had solidified and formed a solid casing around our earth and her atmosphere. Terra had retreated within her shell.

To an observer from the outside Terra now had a strange appearance, it was no longer truly round for at intervals huge, spike-like tubes protruded from its coverings, tubes which, an instant later, began to shoot forth streams of fiery gasses into the void. There was a horrid lurch, and the planet started to move!—. Terra was seeking a new master; the world was in search of another sun!—.

IT WAS a long journey through space; the world had become a new and gigantic space-ship, propelled by huge atomic rockets, and carrying its natural atmosphere and heat hermetically sealed within its transparent man-made shell. It was not so hard to reach its new sun, as if in preparation for the catastrophe from time immemorial the Sun had been rushing toward Vega at an inconceivable speed and now the earth under its own power completing the last lap of the trip for it was toward Vega the independent planet was traveling.

It took nearly a year to complete the journey but then, as if prearranged, the earth fell into an orbit about the star and took for itself a place where the heat from the second sun would be adapted for human life. Dr. Granstedt had calculated the flight to perfection. It was six of the new length years (1,362 days) before the semi-transparent outer shell was melted off into gaseousness by Vega and when it happened, a strange sight was revealed. There lay the world, still surrounded by its atmosphere and still temperate in climate, but there was some difference. Where were all the mountain peaks that had once risen into the atmosphere, where were the long low plains? Everywhere things seemed different. Where was the land? All over the surface of the planet was a vast shallow sea, with here and there a tiny island dotting

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its surface; all the main land was submerged!! Dr. Granstedt's travel idea had been perfect but he had forgotten one little thing; *he had left the moon behind!!!!*

IT was a horrible death that the human race had suffered, the uncontrollable water had swept the land clean of life, the very surface of the earth, without the moon's continual pull had buckled and twisted, throwing masses of lava into the steaming sea. The earth had become a chaos in which no life could have hoped to exist, however hardy it might be. But that is all over now and scientists on one of Vega's inner planets are still trying to figure out in their reptile heads, for intelligence is not a strictly human feature, what brought the watery planet to join the huge star's coterie.

* * *

Atwar pushed back his motor chair. "I knew I could do it," he said, or rather his eyes passed on the message, for his race carries on all conversation in that way, not having been equipped with vocal cords, "I always have said that the atom could be exploded and now I've proven it. It was all as I expected it to be, except that I can't understand what made the third electron jump to another atom, but of course that is a minor detail. But come, we must announce our findings and the committee meets in five minutes."

Whirling his motor chair he glided from the room.

THE END

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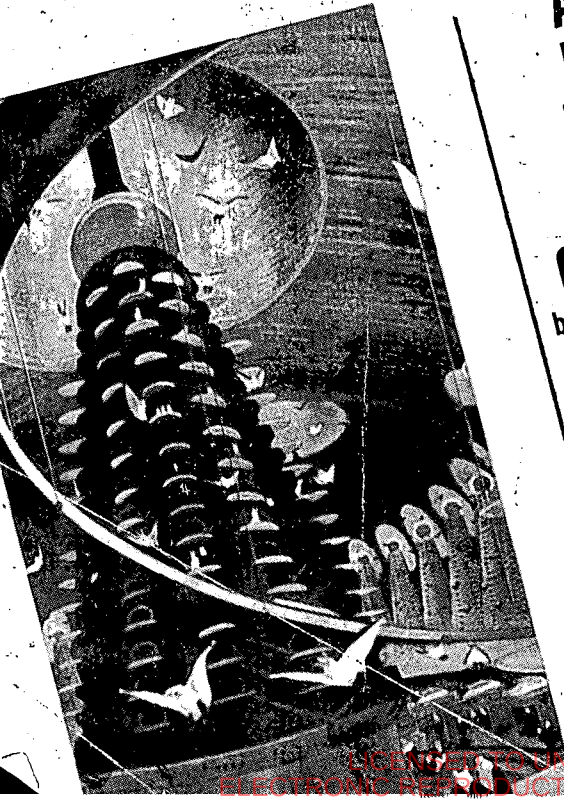

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